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Formality ends with 'call me Tony'

Holidays cut as MPs face 22-Bill session

By Philip Webster, Political Editor

TONY BLAIR cast aside tradition and formality and demanded discipline and hard work yesterday as the first Labour Cabinet meeting for 18 years approved an all-session programme of 22 Bills to become law in a marathon parliamentary session.

The measures, which include two education Bills to drive up standards and reduce class sizes, an attack on crime and a shake-up of the health service, as well as the radical plan to establish a Scottish parliament, were given the go-ahead at a "serious and brisk" two-hour gathering.

The session will start on Wednesday and go through to the autumn of 1998, as Labour acts straightaway to fulfil many of the key pledges of its manifesto.

Mr Blair told his colleagues to "call me Tony" as he announced that the centuries-old tradition of ministers addressing one another by their titles in Cabinet will be dropped. Ministers will use their Christian names as they debate in private.

The Prime Minister then gave them a lecture on what he required of them, which some ministers disclosed was even sterner than the remarks he had used to Labour MPs the previous day. He said that Labour's key pledges and his Contract with Britain were at the heart of the election campaign and must be at the heart of the programme for government. "We are here to work, not enjoy the trappings of power. We need discipline, unity and co-ordination," he then added: "There is hope

- Education: smaller classes, standards up
- Referendum: Scottish and Welsh devolution
- Finance: windfall tax, reducing VAT on fuel
- Employment: national minimum wage
- Crime: punishing young offenders
- Health: to abolish the NHS internal market

and optimism out there, but there is a lot of hard work to be done here."

Then they agreed, as Gordon Brown had promised in February, to forgo their recommended pay rises for this year. Mr Blair will not take the £44,443 that would have taken his salary up to £143,860, and Cabinet ministers will not take the £16,009 that would have put their salary up to £103,860. However, they have all received big increases from their wages of Opposition and Downing Street made plain that their sacrifice was only for the year.

In keeping with the furious pace of the early days of the Blair Government, it emerged that parliamentary recesses are to be shorter, with the Whitsum break later this month expected to be no more than a couple of days.

Education, Mr Blair's number one priority during the

election, is the centrepiece of one of the most ambitious Queen's speeches to come forward in recent years.

Apart from the 22 Bills there will be a White Paper forecasting early legislation — possibly in the coming session — to introduce freedom of information. It appears likely, too, that there will be an early Bill to abolish the voting rights of hereditary peers.

The first education Bill will sweep away the assisted places scheme, which funds private education for brighter children, to raise £40 million to be spent on cutting class sizes for five, six and seven year olds. The second is regarded by Mr Blair as the "most far-reaching attack on under-achievement in schools" that has ever been undertaken. This will include a new General Teaching Council to raise standards of teachers. There will also be Bills to hold referendums this autumn on setting up a Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly; take 250,000 young people off benefit and into work; and introduce a windfall tax on the privatised utilities; and end the internal market in the NHS.

Among other measures are the introduction of fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders; bringing in a national minimum wage through establishing a Low Pay Commission; and a cut in VAT on fuel to 5 per cent through the Budget.

Speaking in Downing Street after the meeting, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, said he was "very proud" of the legislative package. "I am looking forward to implementing that programme and showing that a different government can make a difference. And that is what our Queen's Speech will reflect."



Members of the Oxford University "dance sport" team yesterday as they practised their steps for tomorrow's Varsity match with Cambridge

Oxford women get blue at the Varsity ball

By Ruth Gledhill

WOMEN ballroom dancers from Oxford University will for the first time be eligible for a full blue when they quickstep on to the floor in the annual Varsity match against Cambridge tomorrow.

Following Olympic recognition for ballroom dancing, the women's blues committee at Oxford has decided to upgrade the sport from half-blue to full-blue status.

But for the gents from Oxford who partner them across all four dances of waltz, quickstep, cha-cha-cha, and jive

on the sprung floor at the spacious Kelsey Kerridge sports hall in Cambridge, only a half-blue will be up for grabs. And although the Cambridge ladies will qualify for a half-blue, for the men at Cambridge there will be no blues at all.

This is despite the fact that in dancing, although men and women must be equally fit, the men have the harder job. The onus is on them to set the pace, lead their partner and read the floor properly to avoid collisions.

In the world of ballroom dancing, the Varsity match is as hotly debated as the boat race. Cambridge usually

emerge the victor, winning 16 matches so far to Oxford's nine. But the possibility of a full blue for the Oxford dancers could give them the competitive edge this year.

Matthew Buck, of the Oxford team, said: "The Varsity match is of enhanced importance this year as a full blue will be up for grabs for the first time. We have several champions on our team. Although we are definitely the underdogs, we are hopeful of pulling off a surprise result."

Nicola King, 20, a top orienteer who is president of the Oxford blues committee, said the committee had

upgraded ballroom dancing at its latest meeting because of changes in the sport.

She said: "Ballroom dancing is not just something that couples do at weddings any more. The emphasis has changed. Ballroom dancing has become dance sport. They put a lot of time, money and commitment into it. It is one of the largest clubs within the university."

There are 800 ballroom dancers at Oxford alone, making it the third largest university club. Ballroom dancing is one of the most popular student activities at both universities.

Senior Tory's death prompts early poll

By Our Political Editor

SENIOR Conservative MP died yesterday, less than a week after clinging on to his London seat by 724 votes.

The death of Sir Michael Shersby, MP for Uxbridge, at the age of 64 will mean one of the earliest by-elections of any Parliament and will prompt a wave of interest from the scores of former Conservative MPs swept away in last week's landslide.

It stunned Sir Michael's colleagues. He was being talked of as a likely deputy Speaker in recognition of his long and distinguished Commons service.

He was thought to have died of a heart attack and there was inevitable speculation that the

strain of the election might have been a factor.

Early indications yesterday were that none of the "big names" who lost their seats last week, such as Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Portillo, would be encouraged to apply for the Conservative nomination in the seat.

However, Tory sources said that a former backbench MP or junior minister might stand a much better chance. One name being mentioned yesterday was Sebastian Coe, who lost the marginal Palmouth and Camborne seat to Labour. The Tories have not won a by-election since 1989.

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Leading article, page 20



"Well, you don't seem very upset about missing your holidays"

Heart operation for Heseltine

Michael Heseltine, 64, the former Deputy Prime Minister, underwent a heart operation five days after being admitted to the private Harley Street Clinic in London suffering from chest pains.

Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative party chairman, said Mr Heseltine was resting after an angioplasty operation to expand a coronary artery. The operation involves threading a "balloon" into the artery and inflating it.

Triplet secret

Anthony and Julie Cohn, parents of surrogate triplets, spoke of their joy and said they had had to keep their "blessings from God" a secret from anyone other than very close family and trusted friends in the months leading up to the birth. Page 7

BCCI fraud man jailed for 14 years

By George Sivell

ABBAS GOKAL, 61, the former shipping magnate, was jailed for 14 years for his role in sinking the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) in what is believed to be the world's biggest fraud.

The sentence, too, is the most severe of its kind handed down by a British court. It follows Gokal's conviction last month on charges of conspiracy to account falsely and conspiracy to defraud. His trial lasted six months.

Gokal, former chairman of the Gulf Group, siphoned \$1.2 billion (£750 million) from BCCI through offshore companies, threatening ruin for thousands of bank depositors, including the Western Isles

council in Scotland. His conviction makes him Britain's biggest fraudster in a case that may never be matched in scope and complexity.

He was also ordered to pay nearly £3 million from his personal assets. If he fails to do so within two years, he will have to serve another three years in prison.

Gokal is understood to have received about £4 million in legal aid to fund his fight against the charges. The case is the latest in a growing list where millionaires have pleaded poverty when brought before a court.

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Background, page 26

Blue Peter finds sweeps' event a shade too sensitive

By Carol Midgley
Media Correspondent

THE whiter-than-white BBC children's programme, *Blue Peter*, was yesterday accused of "political correctness gone mad" after refusing to film child chimney sweeps because they had blackened faces.

Producers of the programme had planned to screen a mini-feature on a Dickensian festival organised by the Rochester and Medway Council on Bank Holiday Monday, but decided the spectacle of children covered with soot might cause racial offence. They pulled out of the Rochester Sweeps' event, in Kent, based on a tradition described by Charles Dickens in his first collection of essays,

Sketches by Boz, claiming such a feature could be open to misinterpretation.

Critics said the decision was ludicrous and was making a racial issue out of an historical event. One said: "They knew they were coming to film child chimney sweeps. What did they expect them to have — scrubbed clean skin?"

A spokeswoman for *Blue Peter*, which celebrates its 3,000th episode tonight, said producers had planned to film one group of children dressed as chimney sweeps. "But when they said the children were completely blacked up — not just a little bit of soot — we didn't think it was appropriate. We asked the organisers if we could film some morris dancers instead but we were refused."

Oliver Macfarlane, editor of *Blue Peter*, said: "I was concerned that showing people on TV with artificially created black faces might cause offence."

Tony Stalker, of Wainwright, Kent, and a veteran of the event, said: "Morris dancing is based on Moorish culture and, of course, Moors had black faces. And everyone knows the sweeps' black faces just represent soot."

He added: "There were people from a range of ethnic groups watching the event and not one appeared to complain they felt racially offended."

The May Day event marks the end of the chimney sweeps' working season when they would join local morris dancers to celebrate the coming of spring.



Kayleigh Baker, 8, at a similar event in Redditch

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Reform of party funding could help Tories recover

BY PETER RIDDELL

RIDDELL ON POLITICS

THE Conservatives are worried by Labour's new proposals on cleaning up party funding. They are wrong. Disclosure of contributions above £5,000 and controls on overseas donations are not only inherently right, but they would provide the spur that the Tories need to revitalise themselves.

The sums involved are dwarfed by the amounts spent in any election year in California and are less in real terms than in the 19th century here. Moreover, the Tories no longer enjoy a huge financial advantage over Labour.

Funding matters because of who

donates and why. No doubt, most wealthy individuals who make donations, just like trade unions, do so because they are persuaded that the Tories or Labour would be better for the country. But there is a big difference between giving a few pounds, or even £100, as a membership subscription and donating a few hundred thousand pounds. The former is rightly a private matter. The latter is not. The Tories have always taken a "none of your business" attitude. They are mistaken. Big donors are courted, feted and given access to ministers (much good may it do both). And there are suspicions of favours and honours in return. There is also something

odd about those not qualified to vote in Britain being allowed to donate to British parties. The dangers have been shown by disclosure over Chinese donations, and access, to President Clinton and his re-election campaign last year.

The main British parties have become less dependent on traditional corporate sources of revenue, such as big public companies and trade unions, and more reliant on wealthy individuals. The Tories have attracted some big individual contributions, from both home and abroad, reducing the incentive to

attract more individual members and small donors to the party.

Fuller disclosure of sizeable donations, and controls on contributions from abroad, are desirable in their own terms to show that everything is above board. Labour needs to be frank itself, given its pre-election secrecy about the blind trusts financing Mr Blair and other party leaders — as well as the large amount of help it receives in kind from union officials working for the party.

Mr Blair could make a start by insisting that all people appointed

by ministers to public posts, or receiving an honour, should have to disclose any money contributed to a political party.

Significantly, there has been no talk of full state-funding beyond the limited help given to opposition parties for their work in Parliament — which should be extended. The public opposes state funding of the ordinary work of parties, which would reduce the pressure on them to broaden their base of support by seeking new members. The only acceptable change would be a tax relief or the like matching small donations.

Tighter controls would, and should, force the parties to seek

more money in small amounts. Labour's success on May 1 was partly built on the increase of two-thirds in its individual membership. The Conservatives have never given out official national figures, but no one disputes that their membership has been on the decline, along with their organisation. A precondition for any Tory electoral recovery is a revival of the party's organisation and membership, as happened in the late 1940s. The current system of fundraising has not done the Tories any good electorally, and has only fuelled the impression of shady dealings.

Daniel Johnson, page 20

£100,000 for man tricked into confession

A former paratrooper who was jailed for six years by the Old Bailey for conspiracy to rob was awarded £100,000 damages yesterday by a High Court jury who were told that police had fabricated evidence and tricked him into implicating himself.

Ramon Canale had sued Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, for malicious prosecution and false imprisonment after he spent 20 months in jail before being freed on appeal in November 1989. The police were also ordered to pay the costs of the month-long hearing, which were estimated at £300,000.

Telephone bill

Two councillors accused of having an affair have been asked by a council committee to pay £600 for calls made on council-owned mobile telephones — at public expense. Arthur Latham, leader of the Labour group on Havering Borough Council, in Essex, and Caroline Warren insist that most of the calls were made on council business. The district auditor said that nothing illegal had occurred.

Fireman shot

An off-duty fireman was shot twice in the head at a bus stop on the outskirts of Glasgow during the morning rush-hour, in what appeared to be a gangland-style killing. Ralph Spratt, 34, of Clydebank, was murdered 200 yards from his home as he stood on Kibbowie Road. A man wearing a motorcycle helmet shot him with what is thought to have been a handgun. The assailant escaped.

Fire strike talks

Firefighters suspended their industrial action in Essex and held talks with Essex County Council leaders. More than 900 firemen have staged seven strikes in the county over £1.5 million cuts in the service budget. They had been due to walk out at 6pm. The council has spent more than £500,000 hiring Green Goddess appliances and police escorts to provide cover during the strikes.

Food for flights

Hundreds of British Airways passengers had to take food parcels on board their long-haul flights from Heathrow Terminal 4 as members of the 1,200-strong catering staff worked to rule. The airline handed out food vouchers to passengers checking in for all flights from the terminal, and urged them either to eat in the airport before departure or to take sandwiches for the flight.

Football tribute

The world's first black professional footballer who died in penniless obscurity has been acknowledged by the unveiling of a headstone at his unmarked grave in Doncaster, South Yorkshire. Arthur Wharton, a missionary's son, who came to Britain from the Gold Coast in the 1880s, died in 1930 and remained forgotten until Phil Vassili, a writer, began to research his past.

Non-stop comedy

Channel 4 is devoting its May Bank Holiday weekend schedule to a celebration of British comedy and the history of the double entendre. Programmes include re-runs of *Up Pompeii*, *On the Buses*, *George and Mildred* and *Rising Damp*. Julian Clary will present *Has Anyone Seen My Pussy?*, a documentary on the rise of innuendo in comedy shows.

Blair resists Irish pressure to let IRA join talks

BY ARTHUR LEATHLEY, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

TONY BLAIR yesterday resisted pressure from the Irish Government to allow Sinn Féin into multiparty talks when they reopen next month.

The Labour leader made clear that Sinn Féin will not be included in talks until there is proof of a "credible and unequivocal" ceasefire. Senior colleagues said it was "highly unlikely" that the party would be allowed into talks when they reopen on June 3.

Mr Blair made his views clear during a Downing Street meeting with John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, the first overseas Head of State to meet the new Prime Minister.

Irish leaders have stepped up pressure on the new Government to allow Gerry Adams' party into discussions as soon as possible to revitalise the peace process. Mr Bruton suggested that a ceasefire, if called within days, could pave the way for Sinn Féin's inclusion in the talks.

Mr Blair, joined by Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, made clear to

Labour's poll victory could be a turning point in Britain's relations with the European Union, Jacques Santer, the European Commission President, says in today's *Economist*. He writes that the result is what Britain's friends want. However, they do not expect the Government to compromise on defence of Britain's vital interests, nor for difficult issues to become easier. "What matters is the spirit in which difficulties are tackled and how differences are resolved."

Mr Bruton that Sinn Féin would be allowed into talks only if an IRA ceasefire was "adhered to in deed and word". Dr Mowlam said later: "I am not sure that June 3 is possible." The Prime Minister stuck rigidly to the stance adopted by John Major in demanding a genuine ceasefire.

The hour-long meeting, intended to demonstrate the two

leaders' commitment to inject fresh momentum into the talks, covered more than 20 issues but concentrated mainly on the multiparty talks. Although both leaders said the tone of the meeting had been friendly and raised hopes of further progress, Mr Blair is anxious to tread warily. Senior Labour figures say that Mr Blair would not be rushed into moves "just to give an artificial appearance of activity".

Mr Bruton, under pressure from nationalists ahead of his own imminent general election, raised the prospect of Mr Adams and his colleagues attending the talks. His move comes after Dr Mowlam suggested in March that Sinn Féin should be included in talks swiftly after a declaration of a ceasefire.

Labour leaders have been more cautious about Sinn Féin's entry after the string of IRA bombings and hoaxes during the election campaign. Senior Labour figures refused to specify the timescale of any ceasefire before allowing Sinn Féin to the table, and insisted that the credibility of the ceasefire was the crucial issue.

The recent spate of attacks on railways across England has made Labour adamant that no ceasefire will be accepted as genuine until there is clear proof, possibly over a period of months, that other terrorist activities such as punishment beatings and targeting have also ceased.

On Wednesday Mr Blair met David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, to reassure him that he would not give way to nationalist pressure without a commitment to ending violence.

However, Mr Bruton insisted that, if Republicans could demonstrate that a new ceasefire was genuine, he saw no reason why Sinn Féin should not be at the table when talks resume in Belfast.



Cherie Booth putting the case for St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council at the Court of Appeal yesterday

Cherie returns to work as the Blair family's breadwinner

Frances Gibb reports on an unusually well-attended appeal hearing

CHERIE BOOTH, QC, was back earning her living in court yesterday, dressed in her counsel's wig and gown to lead a test case in the Court of Appeal on workers' rights.

For Ms Booth it was very much business as usual, even if she now travels to court from Downing Street. "Glad to see you're all so keen to learn about employment law," she told the waiting press corps when she arrived.

Then with the minimum of fuss the Prime Minister's wife, whose estimated annual earnings at £200,000 are rather more than her husband's, pulled out wig, gown, white collar and robe from a black bag and "robed up" in the middle of the courtroom over her black trousers and print shirt. "Don't mention my new robing room, guys," she joked. A few light-hearted words with counsel for the other side, some congratulatory kisses, a request for water and then it was down to work.

The case, Ms Booth's first court appearance since the election, was not one which would normally excite much public interest, despite its wide-ranging

ramifications. But she told Lords Justices Beldam, Waite and Swinton Thomas that the effect of the Employment Appeal Tribunal ruling against which she is appealing was nothing short of "momentous".

Ms Booth, 42, the only woman in a row of four QCs, four junior counsel and four solicitors, is acting for St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council in an appeal brought by teachers and staff employed at a special school. They were dismissed and then re-employed under less favourable employment conditions when the school was taken over by the borough council from the local county authority.

But the staff, with union backing, lodged an industrial tribunal claim, arguing that they were entitled to the same employment conditions as before the transfer. They failed, but appealed successfully to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. The appeal tribunal's ruling was contrary to domestic law, to European law and to common sense, Ms Booth told the judges.

It would have the effect of "ossifying"

employers' terms and conditions so that these could not be changed, regardless of any advantage, if their organization was taken over. Within the hour, Ms Booth was plunged into obscure legal authorities and European rulings to demonstrate why the employees should not be entitled, as she put it, to "have their cake and eat it".

Denmark in particular, she said, had provided a "trio of cases with profound implications for England". She expounded a perfectly balanced, almost new Labour, argument about how far the EC-acquired rights directive which is at the heart of the case actually protects workers' rights. The directive did not impose general standards of behaviour throughout the European community, she said. "It gives a minimum protection and it is up to national courts to say how that protection is worked out."

Ms Booth broke for lunch with, "sorry guys, that must have been riveting for you". But there was no doubting her enthusiasm. Asked if she was glad to be back, she said: "Very!" As to whether it beat electioneering, she just smiled.

Bishop apologises for marriage ruling

BY AUDREY MAGEE, IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

AN IRISH Roman Catholic bishop has apologised for the first time for the hurt caused to Protestants who married Catholics and were forced to raise their children in the faith of their parents.

Dr Willie Walsh is seeking forgiveness from Protestants who were obliged to sign a declaration before marriage that they would rear their children as Catholics. The Church refused to marry couples of mixed denomination who declined to sign the *Ne Temere* decree.

In what is seen as a huge shift in Roman Catholic thinking,

Dr Walsh, the Bishop of Killaloe, in the west of Ireland, has said that the *Ne Temere* ruling was "contrary to the spirit of Christian generosity and love".

Writing in the May edition of the religious magazine *The Furrow*, Dr Walsh admits that the decree inflicted great sadness and pain on young people in love and on the threshold of married life.

The apology has been welcomed by the Church of Ireland which cites the ruling as a main cause of the decline of Protestantism in the republic.

Information Act would unleash torrent of public queries

THE main effect of a Freedom of Information Act would be to trigger a torrent of public inquiries to Government departments. It would be launched amidst a spate of publicity and the public would be told how to get the information they want.

A tough Act would allow the public to get straight answers about medicines, health and safety practices, environmental regulations, decisions on new roads and rail links, food safety. It might even force the Government to change the way they collected information so they had useful data to release — for example food safety data is gathered in such a way at present that a company or product is not identified.

But the power of the Act however

will largely depend on the fine print and how far the Government is willing to disclose its own briefings and findings.

Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, said yesterday that work would start immediately on a White Paper. Whitehall sources last night thought it could also include data protection and privacy issues.

But it is unclear how far — if at all — Ministers would lift the rules on Cabinet papers and departmental briefings. It is unlikely the block would be lifted on matters about defence, international relations, security services, the police, fairness of legal proceedings, personal privacy, commercial confidentiality and huge tranches of policy.

This week Tony Blair showed his commitment to openness by allow-

Tony Blair is planning a White Paper to consider the options for a Freedom of Information Bill. Valerie Elliott looks at the consequences of lifting Whitehall's traditional veil of secrecy

ing a cabinet sub-committee to be photographed for the first time. He has also given the green light for some political advisers and senior officials to speak out on policy matters.

His real commitment will be tested therefore in the make-up of this new Bill. He might wish to make some inroads in the present exemptions list. For example, while there is a ban on work of security services, he might allow disclosure of any illegal activity uncovered by

them. The Government would also have to consider the question of cost, or whether to charge at all. John Major introduced a new code offering access to information but the charges may have put people off. Last year for example only 2,053 inquiries were received, although that was nearly double the 1995 figure of 1,253.

An hourly rate is charged depending on the time taken to find out the answer. Sometimes a routine inquiry is given free of charge, but

anything making more than five hours work, would be charged at about £20 an hour.

A pressure group however who requested complicated facts might not get over £1,000 in fees and if a nuclear inspector or some other specialist is required he might charge some £45 an hour.

Mr Major decided that if policy advice were published then officials would not be free and frank with their views. Ministers would receive anonymous briefing papers which would be worthless as guides.

But even he was eventually persuaded to introduce a harm test on policy papers and allow their release if candour was not threatened, and in cases of overriding public interest the papers could be released anyway. Yet so far no piece of

information has been released in Whitehall for over-riding public interest means.

Even the appeal system at present is complicated. If a member of the public is dissatisfied with an answer at present, he can complain to the Department to review it, and if that fails he can ask an MP to raise the matter with the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Michael Buckley.

But the present code does not even relate to bodies outside the civil service — so the Atomic Energy Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority, police, other nationalised industries, local government and quangos are exempt.

Maurice Frankel, director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said last night: "I think the Government is being much too

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Judge rules that excessive force was used

Thief wins case against farmer who kicked him

By PAUL WICKESON

A BURGLAR has successfully sued a farmer who broke his jaw with a kick after catching him stealing roof slates from a piggery. Stanley Wiles, 63, must pay damages to Malcolm Phillips, 37.

Mr Wiles used excessive force when he struck Mr Phillips as he crawled on the ground, already semi-conscious from an earlier blow that had fractured his skull, Mrs Justice Smith ruled at the High Court in Leeds.

Mr Phillips had sued the North Yorkshire farmer for damages for injuries, including the fractured skull, a broken leg and a fractured jaw, sustained during the incident in January 1991.

But Mrs Justice Smith said that Mr Wiles, who runs a piggery at Osgodby, near Selby, was only liable for the broken jaw and the other injuries inflicted when he kicked the thief. "I think he kicked out violently, more violently than was necessary or was reasonable."

Mrs Justice Smith decided that the earlier injury and tying the dazed thief to a gate in a crucifix position were not unreasonable. She dismissed damages claims for those assaults, saying the farmer was within his rights effectively to make a citizen's arrest by stringing him up. She said he was entitled to fasten the



Stanley Wiles, left, who will have to pay damages to Malcolm Phillips, right, whose jaw he broke

string as tightly as he wanted.

Mr Phillips was given legal aid to bring his claim. Mrs Justice Smith adjourned the case to assess damages.

Mr Wiles was acquitted at York Crown Court in 1992 of wounding Mr Phillips with intent. In 1991 at the same court Mr Phillips, from York, was given a conditional discharge after admitting the attempted theft of slates.

After yesterday's judgment, Mr Phillips, who still uses a walking stick, said: "I am happy with the decision that some form of liability was found and that the judge agreed he went too far. To this day I still can't recall what happened on that night. The court was told how after

later and found him mumbling incoherently with his head on his chest.

Mr Wiles told them: "I threw a punch, or possibly two, at him. Then I grabbed hold of him with one hand at the back of his neck and the other at his backside and swung him straight round. He ended up on the other side of the passageway behind me. I believe he struck a pillar."

Mrs Justice Smith ruled that Wiles had used reasonable force up to the point when he lashed out with his foot. She said: "He has not explained to me why it was he kicked the plaintiff away. He used substantial force."

"By this time anger and indignation, provoked probably in part by the failure or refusal to answer his questions, were probably the dominant emotions in the defendant's mind. I think he kicked out more violently than was necessary or reasonable."

Dismissing the claims for the other injuries, she said it was lawful for a citizen to take such action to defend himself or his property. "I accept the defendant was very frightened for his own safety. It was very dark. He was one, and they were three. He did not know where the other two were at the time."

"I think his action was within the bounds of what was reasonable in the circumstances, violent though it was."

Musical legacy of murdered daughter

By RUSSELL JENKINS

MUSIC composed by a judge's murdered daughter will be played at her funeral today after her parents discovered it in the memory banks of her electric piano.

Brian and Diane McGrath of Wimslow, Cheshire, discovered the piece by Rachel, 27, as they went through her belongings after the killing. Miss McGrath was knifed to death in the car park of a public house in south Manchester last month; after she had gone to collect her partner, Kevin Forster.

Judge McGrath, a district judge who sits in Manchester, said they were overjoyed to have found the composition, which they believe shows their daughter "playing as she felt". He said: "She had a great love of music and was never happier than when she was playing, and this is very much part of her. It has a poignancy which will bring tears but it underlines the loss of a beautiful and talented daughter."

Miss McGrath, who was a building society assistant manager, had played piano in local restaurants and more recently became a leading player in an amateur operatic society.

A man has appeared in court charged with her murder.



Mourners will hear music by Rachel McGrath discovered after her death

Kitchen hand put petrol on the menu

By MICHAEL HORSWELL

A DRUNKEN Lithuanian kitchen hand who splashed customers with petrol during a protest over low wages was sent to prison for two months yesterday.

Vladimir Maisky, 50, arrived for work clunching a petrol can and a portable stereo on which he was playing nationalist marching music. Diners fled, fearing that cigarettes would ignite the petrol, as staff tried to pin down Maisky, the Old Bailey was told.

Maisky, who speaks little English, received £170 for up to 100 hours' kitchen and cleaning work at Le Mercury in Islington, north London. He was paid by cheque, although he did not have a bank account. Alex Milne, for the prosecution, told the court: "He felt he had been cheated by the restaurant and this was by way of revenge."

Maisky, who came to England after the break-up of the Soviet Union, admitted affray. The court accepted his plea of not guilty to the more serious charge of attempted arson with intent to endanger life.

Judge Denison, QC, the Common Serjeant of London, told Maisky: "You may have had a grievance, real or imagined, about the method and amount you were paid. But when you committed this offence you were drunk... you caused innocent people to be put in a serious state of fear."

Stuart Trimmer, for Maisky, of Forest Gate, east London, said he had been granted a temporary resident's permit which expired on May 15, but was renewable.



Hope, target

Firewoman in sex case wins £6,000

A WOMAN firefighter who has been off sick for eight months after suffering sex discrimination is to return to work after winning £6,000 in an out-of-court settlement.

Jenny Hope, 31, from Bedford, complained that she was subjected to offensive behaviour and ridicule after joining the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Service two years ago. "I was a target because I was a woman," the mother-of-two said yesterday.

She said she was not worried about returning to work. "I think people are big enough to accept that they made mistakes in the past and put them behind them."

Ken Cameron, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union which backed Ms Hope, said: "I'm delighted Ms Hope feels she can go back."

Brownie Jenkins, from the union's solicitors, said: "I hope this case demonstrates to employers that they can take positive steps to address the problem of sex discrimination. The alternative is paying out large sums of money in compensation."

Why it's Ace to call your son Gobnat

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

THE fashion for calling a child Gobnat, Zenith or Ace has accelerated in recent years as parents become more adventurous, according to the authors of a dictionary of first names. The decline in churchgoing is being blamed for parents picking increasingly bizarre names.

A flood of exotic new entries join traditional favourites in the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of First Names*, published yesterday for the first time in five years. As well as a revival of Celtic names, surnames and names of places are being used as first names along with made-up words and some that look suspiciously like misspelled names.

Patrick Hanks, co-author of the revised edition, said: "Some of the names are very much a matter of personal taste. What we are seeing is a reflection of the break-up of church and state values. Previously many people chose the names of their children from a pool of about a thousand names with Christian and biblical connections."

Mr Hanks said that many of the new names such as Gobnat and Blatnam, respectively an Irish saint and queen, and Conley, the Gaelic for chaste, show a return to Celtic roots.

Classic surnames like Bronie, Darwin, Drake and Lambert are recorded as first names for the first time as well as girls - Malerie, Nichelle and Lyra - who appear to have been born of illiterate parents. Compilers also suspect that Halse-Bopp will appear in the next edition.

Potters shun golden chance to make Queen look a mug

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE mug and plate industry has apparently decided that the Queen's golden wedding this year will be a dead-loss for the souvenir china trade.

Manufacturers who have been happy to churn out items for such milestones as the birth of the Duke and Duchess of York's children believe that the market in royal knick-knacks is in decline, and will be producing nothing to remind us that Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, RN, married Princess Elizabeth on November 20, 1947.

Wedgwood, Spode and Royal Worcester have turned their backs on the occasion. Aynsley is producing a line, but only at the request of a mail-order firm. Of the leading potters, only Royal Doulton intends to produce a full range.

At Wedgwood's Stoke-on-



Queen and Duke: she says she wants no fuss

Trent headquarters yesterday, a spokeswoman said that demand for royal commemorative items had declined steadily from its peak in 1981, when the Prince of Wales married Lady Diana Spencer, unleashing a tidal wave of trinkets. The souvenir market for that event is estimated to have been worth about £800 million.

"If there was a major event like a wedding, then obviously we would look again. But for anniversaries, there is not

the demand," the spokeswoman said.

Ken Barnes, of Aynsley, also based in Stoke, said that his firm's decision not to produce any lines of its own did not reflect any waning popularity of the Royal Family.

Part of the problem is that the Lord Chamberlain has not approved a logo or design for the wedding anniversary. The Queen has made known that she does not want a fuss made and, besides, the Lord Chamberlain's office has become increasingly concerned at approved designs being used on unsuitable items. Such commemorative ware as is produced will carry portraits of the Queen and the Duke which do not need the Lord Chamberlain's permission.

Steven Jackson, of the Commemorative Collectors' Society, said: "The manufacturers are making a mistake. There is certainly a demand."

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'We'll look after this ourselves,' says one mother as extra police are called in to keep peace on estate

Parents threaten revenge for primary school rape

BY ADRIAN LEE

EXTRA police were drafted on to the streets of west London last night after parents threatened revenge against five schoolboys accused of raping a nine-year-old girl.

As teaching staff attempted to carry on lessons as normal, as possible at the primary school in Shepherd's Bush, there was shock and anger among parents who gathered at the school gates yesterday. One mother said: "We'll deal with this ourselves. It is estate rules now."

Many said they were horrified, but not surprised, by the attack, said to have taken place in a lavatory block during the lunch hour on Tuesday. The school is on the edge of a sprawling council estate and has a reputation for bullying. Some parents said they refused to send their children there. Other estate residents threatened reprisals against the families of those suspected of the attack.

Five boys, four aged 10 and

one aged 9, were suspended from school on Wednesday after the girl's mother complained to the head teacher about the attack.

A close friend of the girl's mother said: "She is upset and angry. She sent her child off to school as normal. How can something like that happen? She is in a right state." The woman said she withdrew her own nine-year-old daughter from the school last year after a group of boys ran into the girls' lavatories and pulled her parts down.

Other parents complained about poor standards and discipline at the school, which has 182 pupils. One said a boy recently exposed himself to her daughter, who was pinned against a wall.

A lollipop lady at the school said: "It has gone downhill. The kids run riot in the streets. They are out of control and their language is filthy. The teachers don't seem able to

control them. It used to be a respectable school, but now it does not surprise me that this has happened."

A father who has a five-year-old son at the school said: "He is always being picked on. He has had clothes stolen. I can't believe this has happened at a primary school." Another parent said: "My son is terrified of going there. I have complained constantly but nothing ever seems to get done. It is shocking that something like this can happen at a primary school, but the sad thing is that I am not surprised."

Parents were told about the alleged attack in a letter from the chairman of governors. Addressed to "Dear parent/carer", it said a "serious incident occurred at the school... involving an allegation of sexual assault on a year five pupil by a number of other year five pupils". Parents were told that the accused boys had

been excluded and were assured that their children's education would continue as normal.

The school, a mix of Victorian and modern buildings, is virtually surrounded by high-rise flats. It draws its pupils mainly from two council estates and seven out of ten pupils are from ethnic minorities.

The head teacher yesterday declined to comment on the incident. Hammersmith and Fulham Education Authority said it would carry out its own investigation. However, a source at the education authority said: "It is fair to say it is not one of our best schools. It has all the problems you would associate with an inner-city school."

Counselling has been offered to all those affected by the incident, although the children were given no explanation for the absence of six of their friends. The girl has been seen by a doctor and questioned by a policewoman from the area's rape unit.

Playground 'rape'

Girl of 9 raped by five of her classmates

By DANIEL MCGRODY AND STEVE...
BARBARA McMAHON

How newspapers reported the incident yesterday. The school said only that "a serious incident occurred"

Five boys held after 'rape of 10-year-old'

boys have been held by detectives investigating allegations that a 10...

Inspectors praised 'friendly pupils'

By JOHN O'LEARY

THE SCHOOL

THE school was praised by inspectors in their last visit for improving levels of behaviour and giving priority to spiritual, moral and social development.

The inspectors, who made their visit two years ago, credited a new head teacher

with giving strong leadership in an area of social deprivation. Their report said: "Behaviour in the playground is satisfactory. Relationships are sound, opportunities are provided to develop social skills and pupils are friendly

and eager to learn." With 25 pupils in each year group, the school is a medium-sized primary, catering for boys and girls from three to 11.

But the intake is far from typical in other respects. Almost 75 per cent of children qualify for free school meals, compared with just over 50 per cent for the borough as a

whole. An unusually high number of pupils — 43 per cent — have learning or behavioural difficulties, and 42 per cent live with single parents. The large numbers with special needs contribute to an unusually good staffing level for a primary school: there is a ratio of one teacher for every 16 pupils.

Ever-younger offenders test legal limits

By MICHAEL HORSNELL AND DAVID CHARTER

BOYS as young as six commit serious sexual abuse against other children and it is not uncommon for nine-year-olds to commit rape, according to Dr Eileen Vizard, a consultant child psychiatrist.

Dr Vizard, clinical director of a project that assesses and treats juvenile abusers, said that since 1992 the average age of those interviewed has dropped from 17 to 13.

"What has allegedly happened to this nine-year-old girl does not surprise me at all," she said. "We see the little boys and there is no question that they are capable of abuse. We are talking about some

body that the four boys aged ten accused of rape could face charges, but not their alleged nine-year-old accomplice.

Dr Vizard said the age of puberty varies in boys and generally stands between 11 and 15. "We know of course that it is more than possible for boys to have a full erection before puberty," she said.

"We have dealt with boys of nine who have successfully penetrated their victim. The difficulty is what the police and the courts do about it. At that age it's very difficult because of the issue of *doli incapax* [incapable of deceit]. At the age of eight or nine, children know at some level that what they are doing is wrong, but at another level they are very driven by sexual excitement."

The alleged incident has prompted a call from David Hart, leader of the National Association of Head Teachers, that children as young as nine be taught the meaning of rape. There could be no room for caution among primary school teachers in explaining sexual matters and right from wrong, he said.

He also urged every school to review its supervision of pupils, especially at lunchtime when the rape allegedly happened.

A survey of discipline at primary schools in *The Times* last summer found a fourfold rise in the number of under-12s expelled since the start of the decade.

At present, sex education is not compulsory in primary schools, but in practice most children are introduced to it at 10 or 11.

Mr Hart said: "All schools should have a programme of personal and social education, which should include sex education, and I think it is perfectly proper to expect primary children to learn exactly what rape means."

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the teachers' union NASUWT, said order was most at risk at schools during the lunch break, when untrained mothers or other volunteers were left to supervise children.

form of penetrative abuse. It is not trivial.

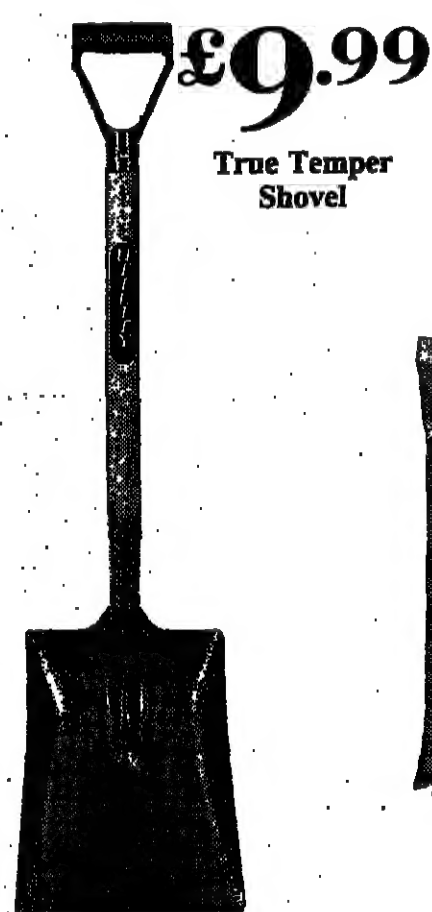
"It is important to realise that up to 50 per cent of all sexual abuse of children is carried out by perpetrators under 21." She had dealt with boys as young as six.

Dr Vizard, who was consulted on the James Bulger murder case, runs the Young Abusers Project, part of the Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust in north London.

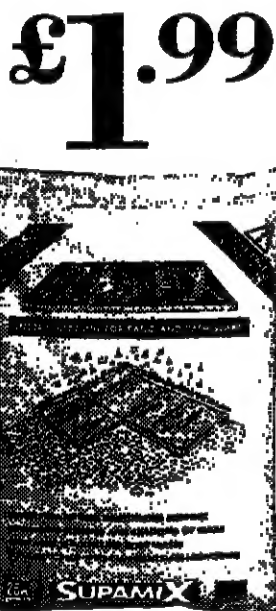
Before 1993 there was a common law presumption that boys under 14 were incapable of sexual intercourse. That was abolished under the Sexual Offences Act which lowered the age of criminal responsibility to ten.

Sources at the Crown Prosecution Service indicated yes-

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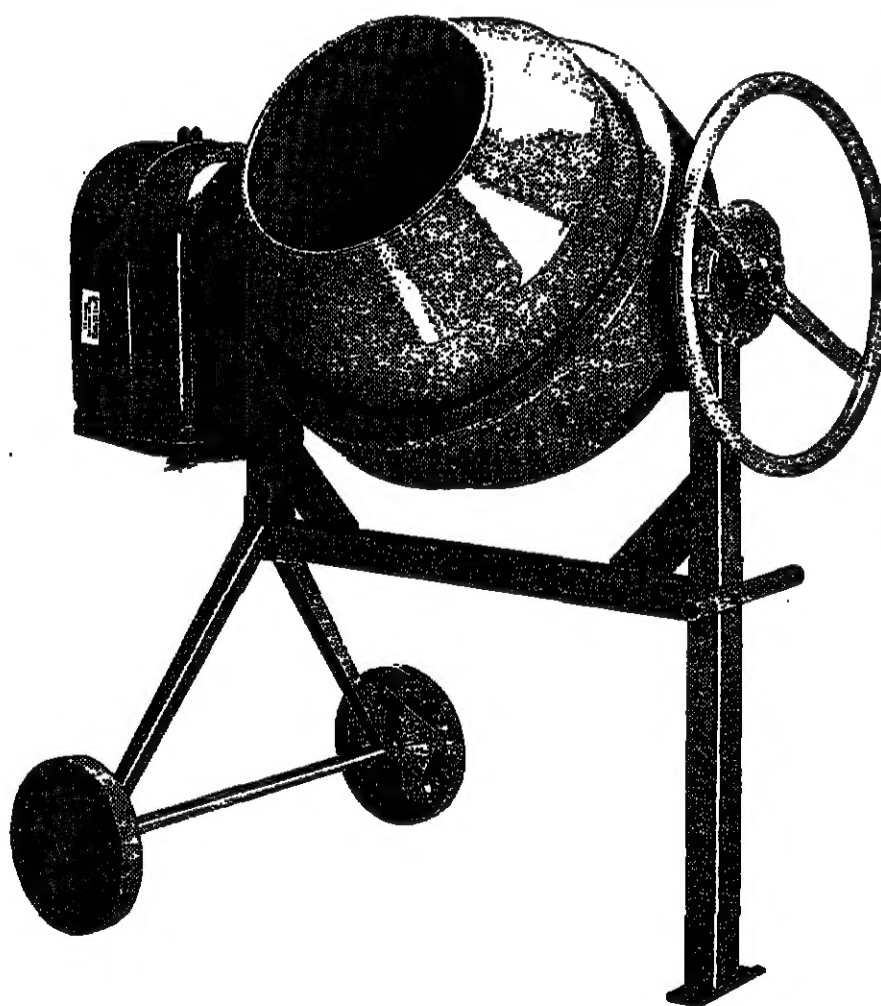
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Legal dogfight ends after noisy pets see therapist

BY PAUL WILKINSON

FOUR dogs whose barking drove neighbours wild are living the quiet life again after therapy sessions with an animal psychiatrist.

Magistrates threatened to remove the animals after Mark Bambrugh protested about their continuous barking while their owner was at work. But six weeks with Jan Westby, a pet therapist, has brought peace to the street and Mr Bambrugh has halted his legal action.

Yesterday the dogs' owner, Pamela Chambers, said: "I can't thank Jan enough. I was worried sick about losing them. The court would have taken the dogs away if they had carried on barking."

"But the therapy has worked and Mr Bambrugh is quite happy now. We have reduced the noise to an acceptable level and we have reached an agreement."

The neighbours, who claim still to be on good terms, went to court earlier this year when Mr Bambrugh sought a noise abatement notice. He said that the constant barking during the day was making life impossible for him, his wife and two young children. He agreed, however, to an



Silent treatment: Jan Westby at work with Sophie

adjournment until yesterday to allow Mrs Westby time to try to quieten Sadie, a 13-year-old whippet cross, Bramble, an eight-year-old collie cross, and 19-month-old alsatian puppies Oscar and Sophie. Yesterday he withdrew his application at Bradford Magistrates' Court.

Mrs Westby has been treating dogs with behaviour problems for five years but had never been asked to help in a court case before. "Dogs that have been brought up in a very stable environment can suffer from separation anxiety when someone important leaves them," she said. "It can manifest itself in many ways, including howling and bark-

ing. I see dogs with varying degrees of behavioural problems and I felt these dogs could be cured. It just takes persistence on the part of the owners." She stayed with the dogs while Mrs Chambers, 43, left her home.

Mrs Chambers, a jeweller, said: "The problem was the constant barking when there was no one in the house. They would bark at everything that pulled up at our door or Mr Bambrugh's. It wasn't fair and I can understand him being unhappy, but I didn't realise how bad it was because I wasn't there. It has improved 100 per cent and we are both happy with the situation now. The main problem was

with the puppies, which are brother and sister. Jan said they were bonded together and with me. She said the first thing we had to do was break the bonding with me and then with each other.

"We had to take their minds off me not being there so we gave them toys to play with and built up the time I wasn't there from 20 minutes to an hour and then two hours, and it has worked. We have broken the bonding."

"We also had to teach them commands. When they barked we let them do so a couple of times and then gave the command 'Enough'. Now, when we say 'Enough', they stop."

"We have to work very hard with them and basically love them like babies. You have to speak to them and be firm, like with any child. It has taken a lot of hard work and patience and we have spent a lot more time with them than we would normally. They are four individual dogs with minds of their own."

Mr Bambrugh said: "The dogs are still there, but we are not getting bothered by them now. I don't think there will be a recurrence and I hope that's the end of the matter. Pamela and ourselves do get on. We have never fallen out."



Anthony Flax with Bobby, the family pet, who was burnt and badly grazed

Pony set on fire after being tied to rail line

BY PAUL WILKINSON

TWO youths tied a Shetland pony to a railway line with its neck on the track, set fire to its mane and waited for a train to arrive. The animal was rescued by two passers-by who heard its whinnies.

Bobby, a five-year-old, was taken from a field near the line. It suffered burns to its back and a badly grazed head after thrashing around on the track, trying to escape. The pony is recovering with its owners, Anthony Flax, 4, and his sisters, Kate, 10, and Hayley, 13, of Gateshead.

Police are searching for the youths, who ran away when the rescuers arrived. Yesterday the children's aunt, Jean Nicholson, said: "These people have to be caught - if they can do this to a little animal, they could do it to a person. It is unforgivable to treat a poor defenceless creature in this way."

Mrs Nicholson, 43, of Felling, Gateshead, said that the ropes were pulled so tight that a vet called to the scene could not use a knife to cut the pony free. She had to burn through them.

Melting ice-sheet raises fears for low countries

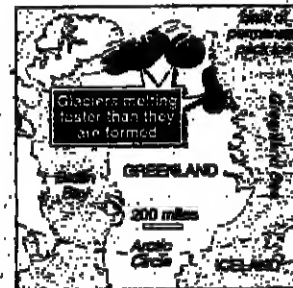
BY NICK NUTTALL

PARTS of the Greenland ice-sheet are melting faster than they are being formed, a discovery which offers further evidence of global warming.

Researchers believe that the thinning of the ice-sheet and glaciers in the north of Greenland are already causing tiny rises in sea levels across the globe. The findings will intensify concern among some small island states, such as Mauritius, that, unless emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide are reduced, they will disappear under the waves. Rising sea levels could also threaten coastlines in low-lying parts of Britain.

Images taken by the two European remote sensing satellites, ERS-1 and ERS-2, analysed by Nasa scientists and other centres, show that the ice on 14 glaciers is disappearing faster than it is formed and is thinning the glaciers by 25 centimetres a year.

The scientists, whose findings are published in the journal *Science*, estimate that the excess melting amounts to about 1.7 billion gallons annually - or just under half the water used in Britain each



day. The scientists say that this is sufficient to raise sea levels by 0.02mm a year.

More studies are planned to see if there is similar melting across Greenland. But the findings back up super-computer models of global warming, which forecast that temperature rises due to man-made pollution will be more apparent near the poles.

Dr Norman Davis, of the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge, said yesterday: "This is pretty good evidence to show that climate change is occurring; that is has begun."

The significance of glaciers melting was that the ice and water produced from those land-based ice-sheets could affect sea levels, he said. "A few centimetres a year is quite a lot because of the size of the ice-sheets involved."

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By KATHRYN KNIGHT



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Dr Vivienne van Someren, a consultant paediatrician at the Royal Free, said the hard work would be coping with the three babies. "They are all fine and they are now approaching the time when they would be full term. The main problem is going to be the sheer physical hard work of coping with three babies at once."



Anthony and Julie Cohn with their triplets yesterday. They described their birth as a blessing from God.

BY LIN JENKINS

The reply she received after complaining incensed her further. "Sainsbury's

The play might not endear the company to customers once they discovered it, the council added.

BY DARRIN GREGORIAN

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Fee rises 'turn medicine into a job for the rich'

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT, AND GLEN OWEN

THE medical profession is in danger of once more becoming a preserve of the rich, according to the students' committee of the British Medical Association.

Tightening of budgets has already forced some leading medical schools to withdraw the subsidy they have traditionally paid to postgraduates who read medicine after a first degree in another subject. This means the fees for the five-year course are creeping from £4,000 to £12,000.

The medical schools at Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Southampton, King's College London and St George's Hospital, London, have ended the subsidy system. Others are known to be considering dropping it. About 10 per cent of

medical students are postgraduates, although in some schools the proportion is as high as 20 per cent.

Derek McLaughlin, chairman of the committee, said yesterday that the high fees were deterring students who decided to switch to medicine after obtaining a degree in a different discipline. They were no longer eligible for a local authority grant because they already had a degree, and they usually had a student loan debt which made it difficult for them to fund the five-year medical course.

"These are people who would potentially become some of the best doctors and who would be most likely to stay in the health service at a time when so many are leaving," Mr McLaughlin said.

"Patients really value what older students with life experience have to offer. These are students who bring wide experience to the profession."

"But with fees at around £12,000, you need to have parents earning at least £40,000 to be able to apply to medical school. As a trainee doctor, I am often contacted by people who want to apply to medical school. The first thing I have to ask them is, 'Are your parents rich?'"

Mr McLaughlin, 35, is in his final year at Nottingham. He trained in biological sciences and worked as a teacher for eight years before deciding to study medicine. "Fortunately I am not affected by the end of subsidies, but if I had been required to pay the full amount I would never have

been able to become a doctor," he said. "Students who find the subsidy removed will now either have to drop the course or build up a tremendous debt before they can qualify."

Other medical students agreed that cuts in subsidies would force them to rely on parents. Sarah Davey, 25, a junior doctor at the Royal Free Hospital, London, said: "The only people who would be able to enter the profession would be from well-off backgrounds." She graduated 18 months ago and still owes £8,000. The BMA says the average debt on qualifying is £6,700.

"During the last three years of training you are studying for 48 weeks a year, so there is no time to supplement the grant with holiday work."



The not-too-bright young students who populated the *Doctor in the House* films went out with the 1950s

Modern intake lacks the experience of its privileged predecessors

REPORTS that parents of prospective doctors should have £12,000 available to underwrite their medical education could be misleading.

The British Medical Association's medical students' committee suggested that the parents of some students would need private funds, but it was referring to the comparatively small number who already had a degree in some other subject and were switching to medicine late in their university careers.

Medical students are changing. The days of the tweed-



Dr Thomas Stuttford

suit, hard-drinking medic portrayed in the *Doctor in the House* series ended in the 1950s. By 1979, when I fought my last general election and had easy access to statistics, more than 80 per cent of

students admitted to the teaching hospital where I was then working had had a state education. By the time I left the hospital two or three years ago, I would suppose that the percentage was very much

higher: few of the students came from a financially privileged background.

Just as all politicians, and most of the medical hierarchy, have remained silent about the current problems of finding adequate numbers of people who are motivated and intelligent enough to become nurses, so have the difficulties of selecting and educating medical students been hidden from public scrutiny.

Today's medical student is much more intelligent, in terms of IQ, than in my generation. Because of the

academic standards needed to gain entry into medical school, today's students are quicker to learn and have a better grasp of the scientific principles that are the basis of high technology medicine. However, it was striking, when sitting in a clinic with students in the early 1990s, that, although bright, they lacked the clinical experience of earlier generations at a comparable stage in their education.

Medical students were fortunate and privileged in my day. The wards were highly disciplined and the patients

received expert care within them, but they had few rights. If a patient had a large liver or spleen, an interesting rash or a peculiar heart sound, they were considered excellent teaching material, available to any student assigned to the team looking after them. Nobody asked the patient: "Would you mind if a student examined you?" It was assumed that their lack of privacy was a price to pay for top-quality care.

Students now have, only limited access to patients. Before medicine became as

specialised as it is, and so many of the patients could be cured by wonder drugs in their own homes, the wards were filled with people who were suffering from the complications of the ordinary diseases that they would later see daily in general practice.

The signs and symptoms of these run-of-the-mill complaints were readily on display, not only in the wards of the teaching hospitals, but in the hospitals where they would later do their house jobs. Now the teaching hospi-

tals are filled with the rare and exotic.

"Treating patients efficiently not only requires knowledge but an understanding of human nature derived from an intense interest in people. It does not require the brain of a Balliol scholar. Whether the present system of selection is finding people who would make good doctors and who would continue to practise after qualification is open to doubt. It is also questionable whether the medical schools are giving them adequate experience in their training."

Doctors to press Dobson for £1bn extra spending

By IAN MURRAY

DOCTORS' leaders are to ask the Government next week for a commitment to spend as much on health as the average among the leading industrialised nations.

Although Labour has promised to stay inside the Conservative spending budget, the doctors will say that unless the money can be found the health service is in danger.

Bringing Britain up to the average level of the other member nations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development would cost £5 billion over five years. Britain spends 7.1 per cent of GDP on health, against the 8.4 per cent OECD average. The United States spends 14 per cent and Japan, at the bottom of the league, 6.9 per cent. The urgent need for extra funding will be at the top of the agenda next Wednesday when BMA council members meet. Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, Sandy Macara,

Plans to close London hospitals have been frozen by the Government pending a review of the capital's health needs. The move means at least a temporary reprieve for St Bartholomew's and Guy's, both of which were to be phased out under the Tory Government's strategy to reorganise London's health services. Tony Blair made a pre-election promise to halt the closures and yesterday Frank Dobson took the first step towards honouring the pledge.

chairman of the council, said yesterday: "I take a very gloomy view of the finances of the NHS. There is a potential crisis. The fact that it hasn't happened yet is because our people are just managing to keep it going." He was optimistic, however, that the Government had a clear intention to devise a

strategy that would improve the health of the nation.

Dr Macara welcomed the Government's commitment to abolishing "the wretched internal market" in the health service, but added that this would not solve the cash problem. "There is already so much that needs to be done with the money that is being wasted. We need to stop costing every single case and start assessing the real needs for care. The managers are bound up inside the internal market without being able to get out to the GPs and find out what they need."

"They should be out there working for public health and not just pushing paper around. We still need them in a different role and I don't think we should be anticipating any savings just by changing the way the system works." The changes "would, however, replace competition with co-operation. We will no longer, thank God, be a purchaser-provider mechanism," he said.

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Tobacco

One million women to recruited HRT stu

JERSEY NEW Flavor

Tobacco firms plan ways to counter advertising ban

TOBACCO companies have compiled databases of millions of smokers so that they can use mailshots to promote cigarettes if the new Government fulfils its promise to ban print and poster advertising.

The firms are already relying on alternative promotion campaigns. They are seeking to improve their image among certain groups, such as the young, by creating labels of clothing and luxury goods.

Tobacco companies have had long practice at outwitting health officials since Norway

banned advertising in 1975. There are bans in the rest of Scandinavia, as well as France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and California.

The Government has yet to say whether it will outlaw sports sponsorship by cigarette firms. Several sporting authorities are expected to lobby the Department of National Heritage and argue against banning sponsorship worth £8 million each year.

Labour's election victory could lead to a European Union-wide ban on tobacco

Designer clothing, luxury goods and a database of smokers' addresses are among the alternative methods for promoting cigarettes, writes Dominic Kennedy

advertising. Britain has been one of the states opposing a draft EU directive which would drastically curb promotions.

The cigarette companies began preparing for restrictions on advertising some years ago, when Labour established a big lead in the opinion

polls, and have reduced their reliance on poster sites. They have huge databases of smokers who can be tempted with free samples, discounts, competitions and lifestyle magazines. This is legal provided that the smokers are over 18. Names and addresses have

been collected by holding competitions, with prizes such as cars or foreign holidays, with entry forms that ask whether contestants are smokers. The names and addresses of people who send off for gifts after collecting coupons are entered on the databases.

Marlboro and Silk Cut send smokers lifestyle magazines aimed at those in their early twenties. When Norway banned smoking advertisements, Camel began selling boots using its brand name, with images of the healthy-

looking outdoor types traditionally used to promote cigarettes. Marlboro now has a fashion store in Covent Garden and Dunhill has a range of luxury goods.

Tobacco companies spend at least £50 million a year on advertising and promotion. That includes £25 million on magazine and newspaper advertisements as well as sports sponsorship.

Cigarette advertisements were banned from television in Britain in 1964. A voluntary code of practice between the

manufacturers and the Department of Health has been followed since 1971 and is occasionally updated.

There have been agreements to stop pipe and cigar advertisements on television, and to display posters at a certain distance from schools.

The tobacco companies agreed in 1985 to freeze the cash spent on sports sponsorship, which includes pastimes such as angling as well as the World Snooker Championship. Embassy has put

£11 million into snooker over the years. Some sports such as football, swimming and athletics refuse tobacco money.

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Association, which has expertly lobbied against Private Members' Bills to ban advertising, has little idea of the views of many of the new MPs elected in Labour's landslide. One of tobacco's toughest parliamentary champions, the Conservative MP John Carlisle, retired at the election and joined the lobby organisation on May 1.

One million women to be recruited in HRT study

By Emma Wilkins

ONE million women are being asked to take part in a study of hormone replacement therapy. The five-year project, which may become the world's largest on HRT and women's health, aims to answer questions about links between the treatment and breast cancer and heart disease.

The study was launched yesterday by the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the NHS Breast Screening Programme. Women attending 100 breast-screening clinics throughout the country will be invited to complete a questionnaire about health, lifestyle and reproductive history. HRT, which helps to alleviate some symptoms of the menopause, and protects against osteoporosis by increasing osteogen levels, was developed in 1940 in the United States and introduced to Britain in the late 1940s. Half of women aged 50 to 64 who now attend breast screening have used HRT at some time. Proponents include the MP Teresa Gorman and the actress Kate O'Mara.

There are 15 main manufacturers producing 40 types of HRT, either oestrogen-only or oestrogen and progesterone mixed, in pill, patch and

cream form. The ingredients are synthetic or made from the urine of mares, specially farmed in Canada.

Researchers will examine whether taking HRT affects the ability of mammography to detect breast cancer. Medical opinion suggests that it may lead to cancers being missed. Dr Emily Banks, an epidemiologist working on the study, said: "In postmenopausal women the breast tissue is much less dense than in younger women, making it relatively easy to detect a lump on a mammogram. However, one of the effects of HRT is to keep the breast tissue denser for longer. The study will also seek to confirm whether HRT provides protection against heart disease."

Dr Banks said doctors knew relatively little about the long-term side-effects. "If someone is really suffering from immediate symptoms, then I think HRT is a very good treatment. The problem lies in its uses in the longer term: we just don't know whether the advantages of protection against certain conditions outweigh the risks of others. That's why we need this study so urgently."

Professor Valerie Beral, who is co-ordinating the



Screen test: from left, Professor Beral, Dr Banks and Julietta Patrick, NHS breast-screening co-ordinator

study, said British women were uniquely placed to add to the sum of knowledge about HRT. "Britain is the only country that can carry out this study because it is the only one with the combination of a large population and a comprehensive national breast-screening programme. This is knowledge that the women of Britain can give to the world."

The study has already started in several clinics, where the response rate indicates that 250,000 women will have been recruited by the end of the year.

Little fidgets are a sign of health

INFANTS who fidget less than their peers are more likely to need urgent treatment for brain damage, according to new evidence from scientists (Nick Nuttall writes).

The discovery, by Austrian scientists based at the University of Graz, could lead to the early detection of children at risk.

The team videotaped 130 infants born at five hospitals in Austria, Italy, The Netherlands and Germany during

their first two years of life. They were monitored for normal writhing movements, which are seen from birth to about nine weeks, and fidgety movements, which commence at six weeks.

Normal fidgeting was classed as a stream of small movements with the neck, body and arms moving in all directions. The researchers found that 96 per cent, or 67 out of 70 babies classified as having normal fidgety move-

ments, developed into infants with normal brains. But 95 per cent, or 57 out of 60 other babies classified as having no fidgety movements, or ones of poor quality, were eventually found to have brain abnormalities.

The scientists, whose findings are published in *The Lancet* this week, say: "Our technique is simple, non-invasive, reliable, quick and can be done in very young infants."

Headaches may spoil pleasure of ice-cream lovers

By Ian Murray, Medical Correspondent

IT MAY not be evident from the way the loving couple in the Häagen-Dazs advertisements intertwine, but eating ice-cream is likely to give you a headache.

A survey in today's *British Medical Journal* found that one person in three endured head pain after eating ice-cream. It occurred whether or not they suffered from migraines.

It was just as common among children, who tend to call it "brain freeze". The headache occurred only in hot weather, with attempts to provoke it in winter always failing.

The survey found that the pain begins a few seconds after rapid consumption of cold foods or drinks and peaks in 30 to 60 seconds. The stabbing, aching pain is usually located in the middle of the forehead, but it can be on one side or behind the eye. Normally it lasts for ten to 20 seconds but it can throb on for up to five minutes.

Researchers who sucked crushed ice found the site of the headache depends on where the ice-cream touches the palate. In some cases toothache occurs.

There is conflicting evidence about ice-cream's effect on migraine sufferers. One study showed that it affected more than 90 per cent of those who get migraines while another sug-

gested it was more common among people who did not suffer from migraines. There was evidence that an ice-cream headache could trigger a migraine.

The best way to avoid the headaches is to ensure that really cold ice-cream does not come into contact with the back of the palate.

"Most people arrive at such preventive measures without the advice of doctors," according to the report's author, Joseph Huilhan, of the neurology department at Temple University, Philadelphia. "Ice-cream abstinence is not indicated."



A hot passion for ice: the Häagen-Dazs couple

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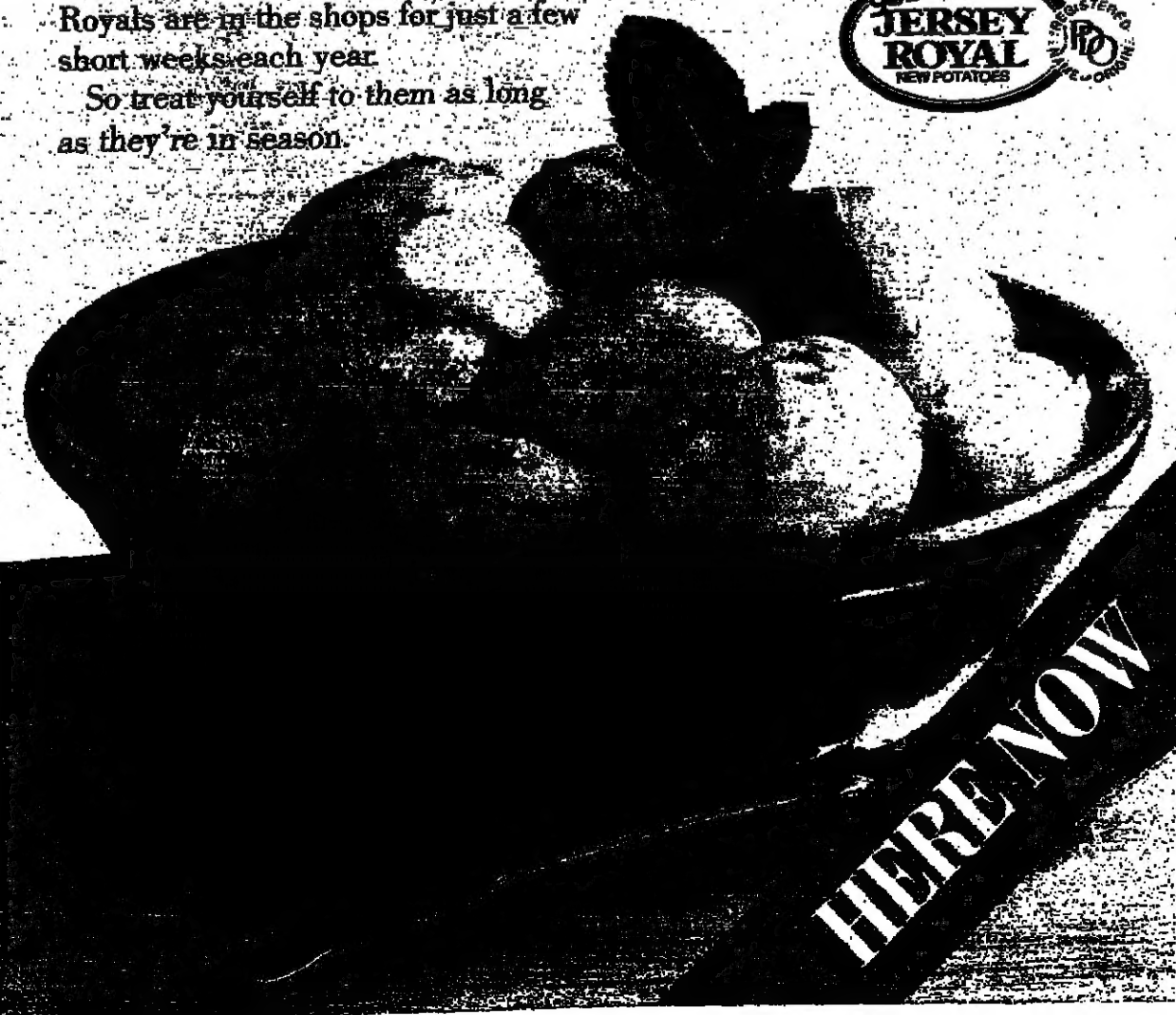
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Media chief quits after 'low-budget' Tory campaign

By Andrew Pierce, Political Correspondent

CHARLES LEWINGTON, one of the architects of the Tory election campaign, has abruptly resigned his £75,000-a-year job as the party's director of communications.

Mr Lewington, 38, decided to leave Conservative Central Office only days after the Tories' worst election defeat for 150 years. His decision to go came as officials acknowledged that the party's once expensive, oil-fuelled fighting machine had lacked the money required for the kind of campaign envisaged by the leadership.

"Reports of a £25 million war chest were way off mark. The money simply could not be raised," one senior party official said last night. The new Labour government's proposal to ban political donations from overseas could badly hamstring the Tories' fightback.

John Redwood, one of the six leadership contenders, will

today announce proposals for sweeping reforms of Central Office.

Mr Lewington, a former assistant editor of the *Sunday Express*, is on holiday and will not return to his post. He will take a two month sabbatical abroad before returning to a career in the media. He had been expected to stay on until the end of the summer, when a new Central Office regime will have been installed after the leadership election.

Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, headhunted Mr Lewington 18 months ago. In the past the job has proved to be something of a poisoned chalice. The previous director of communications, Hugh Colver, had been in post for only a few months when he walked out after rows with Dr Mawhinney over negative campaigning.

Only a handful of senior officials at Central Office

knew yesterday that Mr Lewington had decided not to return to his office at the election "war room" he had set up. The campaign was marred by infighting, rows over posters and advertisements, and disputes with Kenneth Clarke over the anti-Brunels tone of some of the material.

John Major personally vetoed plans to spend millions of pounds on a last-gasp advertising campaign. A party source said: "In the past the message has been 'Better insolvent than defeated'. But not this time. It was the first election campaign we have not been able to write an open cheque."

Mr Lewington enjoyed close relations with Mr Major as Prime Minister. Communications between 10 Downing Street and Central Office had never been as good. But Mr Lewington has complained to friends that he spent 18



Charles Lewington, whose communications department is credited with having been one of the few successes of an election campaign marred by infighting

months fighting divisions in the Tory party rather than concentrating his fire on Labour.

His contract was due to end in the summer and he was to have been asked to stay until after the leadership election. But his friends said yesterday

that he had enough. "He is tired. He has done all he can. It is time to move on," said one.

The election has virtually wiped out the internal command structure of Central Office, which lost three of its vice-chairmen: Dame Angela

Rumbold, Charles Hendry and Sir Graham Bright. A fourth, Sir Geoffrey Pattie, stood down.

Mr Lewington's communications department at Central Office was considered to be one of the few successes of the election campaign.

Prescott pledges to tackle car culture

By Arthur Leathley, Political Correspondent

JOHN Prescott promised yesterday to curb the growth of the car culture and demanded an immediate change in Whitehall thinking to reduce traffic congestion and improve public transport.

He has ordered the environment and transport departments, which come under his supervision, to make integrated transport policy their first priority. Government statistics for the first three months of this year indicate that road traffic is still growing, continuing a trend after three years in which traffic figures stayed almost constant.

Mr Prescott will preside over a review of road-building already shelved by the Conservatives and which could be abandoned. The introduction of motorway tolls and the prospect of taxes on company car parks are among the central policies already being prepared to change public attitude towards travel.

However, there will be no "headlong rush into grand but unworkable projects". Mr Prescott, proud owner of a nine-year old Jaguar, admits that his own car sits uneasily with environmentalists' demands for smaller, fuel-efficient vehicles. However, aides emphasise that the Deputy Prime Minister is not trying to dictate the type of car people use, but is urging drivers to cut back on unnecessary use.

Dorrell calls for home rule review

By Andrew Pierce

STEPHEN DORRELL, the first Tory leadership candidate to signal a major policy change yesterday when he urged a review of the party's anti-devolution stance.

In a speech to the Foreign Press Association, Mr Dorrell said that Labour's plans for a tax-raising Scottish parliament would put enormous strains on the Union. "But we must also think forward."

The Tories had to rebuild in Scotland and Wales against the background of the Government's commitment to proceed with devolved assemblies. He said that the party would have to seek election to the assemblies to ensure that its voice was heard. Otherwise, dissent would find its outlet in nationalism.

"The process of renewal of the Conservative vote in Scotland and Wales is urgent," he said. "If it is to be achieved we must ensure that the party is developing a proper Unionist response to disillusionment with Labour's assemblies."

Yesterday the Scottish Conservatives gave their clearest indication that they would be unlikely to oppose Labour's devolution plans, which already have the backing of the Liberal Democrats. Jackson Carlaw, deputy chairman of the Scottish Tories, said that it might be counter-productive to adopt a negative position in the forthcoming referendum on devolution.

Eton losing grip on government

By David Charter, Education Correspondent

THE playing fields of Eton are losing their centuries-old role as the training ground of government, a survey of MPs' education discloses today.

Britain's biggest-ever Parliament contains the smallest recorded number of Old Etonians as well as the lowest number of MPs educated at independent schools.

Oxford University's influence is also waning. Its representation in Parliament is at its lowest since 1945. Just over a quarter of MPs, 27.9 per cent, went to independent schools, according to the survey for *The Times* by Colin Mellors, professor of politics at Bradford University, and Darren Darcy, a researcher. This compares with 39.6 per cent of the 1992 Parliament, 46.9 per cent in 1979 and 54.3 per cent in 1959, the postwar high. Outside the Commons, about 5 per cent of adults were educated privately.

As recently as 1970, Eton

provided 10 per cent of all MPs. This time just 18 MPs, or 2.7 per cent, are Old Etonians, half the number of the previous Parliament, and less than a quarter of the total of 82, or 3.4 per cent, in 1950. Just 59 Labour MPs, or 4.1 per cent, went to independent school, including the party's two "Old Etonians": Tim Dwyer (Lincolnshire) and Mark Fisher (Stoke Central).

Labour's Cabinet contains ten educated at independent schools. Professor Mellors said: "Eton, the single largest provider of the nation's governors, has slipped quite markedly. On average, from 1945-79 it educated one in ten MPs, now it is one in 25."

This Parliament is the best educated, with graduates making up 72.5 per cent of MPs. Oxford accounts for 14 MPs, 17.3 per cent of the total, compared with 17.2 per cent in 1992. Cambridge has 69 MPs, or 10.5 per cent.

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Ministers claim their seats at the Cabinet table



The Cabinet, from left: Clare Short, Ann Taylor, Donald Dewar, Sir Robin Butler (the Cabinet Secretary), Tony Blair, John Prescott, Jack Cunningham, Chris Smith, Ron Davies, Alistair Darling, Lord Richard, Harriet Harman, George Robertson, Margaret Beckett, Jack Straw, Robin Cook, Gordon Brown, Lord Irvine of Lairg, David Blunkett, and Frank Dobson. Out of sight are Nick Brown, Mo Mowlam, David Clark and Gavin Strang.

By Polly Newton
POLITICAL REPORTER

THIS is undoubtedly a New Labour seating plan. Tony Blair has largely adopted John Major's most recent Cabinet arrangement, but with a handful of different placements that reflect his own priorities and the seniority of individual ministers.

The Cabinet table narrows gradually towards either end so that the Prime Minister, who sits in the middle of the row that faces the window, can — in theory at least — see everybody around it without having to lean forward. John Major has described its shape as "coffin-like". The only chair with arms is the one used by the Prime Minister.

The priority is to be able easily to catch the eye of the Prime Minister during discussions, so the most prestigious

seats are those directly and diagonally opposite him and the ones immediately to his left and right. The one on his right is traditionally taken by the Cabinet Secretary.

A place opposite the Prime Minister is more of a prize than one on his own side — unless the seat is one of those closest to him — because it is easier to attract his attention.

In his diaries, Richard Crossman recalled how, as Secretary of State for Social Services in Harold Wilson's Government, he once turned up late for a committee meeting being held in the Cabinet room. His usual place at the table, next to Roy Jenkins, had been taken by Denis Healey.

It made him realise how difficult it was for a minister at the end of the table on the same side as the Prime Minister to "get an ear in".

In Cabinet the talk goes on

between the PM and the Chancellor on one side and between the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary and the Defence Secretary on the other. Those at the middle talk to each other and those at the ends of the table have to shout to be heard. There I was up beyond Burke Trend, where I

used to sit as Minister of Housing... I had to lean right back to catch Harold's eye behind people's heads before I could get in."

On that score, the losers in Mr Blair's Cabinet include Chris Smith, the National Heritage Secretary, who will be on the same side as the

Prime Minister but three seats to the left. Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, will be on the side facing the Prime Minister but almost at the end of the table on his left, whereas her predecessor, Peter Lilley, had one of the best spots next to the Foreign Secretary. That place will now

be taken by David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The move represents a "promotion" for education: his predecessor, Gillian Shephard, was on the same side as the Prime Minister and four seats to the right.

In Mr Blair's Cabinet, as in

Mr Major's, the Deputy Prime Minister sits on the Prime Minister's left and the Chancellor faces the Prime Minister. But the places on either side of the Chancellor have been switched so that the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, will sit to the right of Gordon Brown and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, will sit to his left.

That means that Lord Irvine will sit diagonally opposite the Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar. The two men were once close friends, but did not speak for many years after Mr Dewar's wife left him for Lord Irvine. Now they will struggle to avoid each other's gaze.

Under Mr Major, the Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, was on the opposite side to the Prime Minister's far left. The new position for Mr Dewar, next but one to the right of Blair, is a reflection of

both his personal seniority and the importance the Prime Minister attaches to Labour's plans for Scotland.

Another to benefit from his long experience is Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Minister, whose seat is immediately to the left of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott. Normally agriculture is a low-ranking department and under Mr Major, Douglas Hogg sat to the right next to the civil servants who take the minutes.

The seat now taken by Mr Cunningham was that of the Lord President of the Council, Tony Newton, who at one stage sat immediately to the left of the Prime Minister but moved along one place after Michael Heseltine became Deputy Prime Minister. Mr Newton's successor, Ann Taylor, will sit three places to the right of the Prime Minister.

Hello everyone, just call me Tony

By Damian Whitworth

WHATEVER acrimony may lie ahead Tony Blair has started out in government with the chummiest Cabinet anyone can remember. In a dramatic break with the formality of his predecessors he announced at his first Cabinet meeting yesterday that his colleagues were to address each other by their first names.

The decision may have been born of pragmatism rather than egalitarianism. After such a long time in opposition

Labour has found being in government a little bewildering.

Even Mr Blair has been confused. Told that the Deputy Prime Minister wanted to see him he was puzzled as to what Michael Heseltine wanted, he confessed to the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Mr Blair's biggest problem will be separating his two Jacks sitting round the Cabinet table and dealing with seven Johns in ministerial posts, including his deputy John Prescott.

Alternatively, the Government could

lapse into schoolyard-like use of nicknames. John Prescott is sometimes known Prezzy to his friends or Giovanni to harracking Tories in reference to his days as a waiter. Mo Mowlam is known as Dr Mo and Frank Dobson is Dobbo.

According to a Downing Street source, Mr Blair was careful to specify that Cabinet members should address each other with the names by which they had always known each other. He allowed for lapses into formality but the future could lie in pet names or worse.

Portillo, Rifkind and Forsyth on shortlist for party chairmanship

By Philip Webster
POLITICAL EDITOR

A SWIFT route back to top-flight politics is being mapped out for Michael Portillo, Malcolm Rifkind or Michael Forsyth, three of the Cabinet ministers who lost their seats in the Conservative general election disaster.

Influential Tory figures are proposing that one of the three should be appointed "Tory chairman" to

begin the task of rebuilding the party, its organisation and its morale after one of the worst results in its history.

The party chairman does not have to be a member of the Cabinet or even an MP. Given the extent of the election defeat, which followed years of decline in the party's local government base, senior Conservatives believe there would be advantages in appointing a leading figure who could put all his energies into

running the party rather than being bogged down with Opposition duties in the Commons.

With the Shadow team already depleted by the huge number of ministerial losses, sources would regard the appointment of one of the three as good use of the talents available to the party. The current chairman, Brian Mawhinney, is expected to be given a leading role in the new Shadow Cabinet.

Senior ministers hope to per-

suade John Major's successor as party leader to break with recent tradition and appoint a chairman from outside Parliament. He or she could not be a formal member of the Shadow Cabinet, but would be allowed to attend meetings when discussions about party affairs were taking place.

In spite of their immediate despair at their defeat last week, Mr Portillo, Mr Rifkind and Mr Forsyth have indicated to friends

that they still regard themselves as political players and are not yet ready to move over to the House of Lords.

All are expected to stand again at the next election, or possibly before then in a by-election, although they are not expected to be in the running for the first by-election of the Parliament, caused by the sudden death yesterday of Sir Michael Shersby. Sir Michael held his seat in Uxbridge, west London,

by 724 votes at the election last week.

The chairmanship proposal, put forward by well-placed sources at the top level of the Opposition, could find favour with the contenders for Mr Major's position, although they are likely to avoid committing themselves to appointments in advance.

The names of all three former Cabinet ministers are being discussed in senior Opposition circles.

Mr Forsyth, a former chairman of the Tory party in Scotland who has a strong reputation as an organiser, is the marginal favourite.

Four other Cabinet ministers lost their seats at the election: William Waldegrave, Tony Newton, Roger Freeman and Ian Lang.

Daniel Johnson, page 20
Letters, page 21
Obituary, page 23

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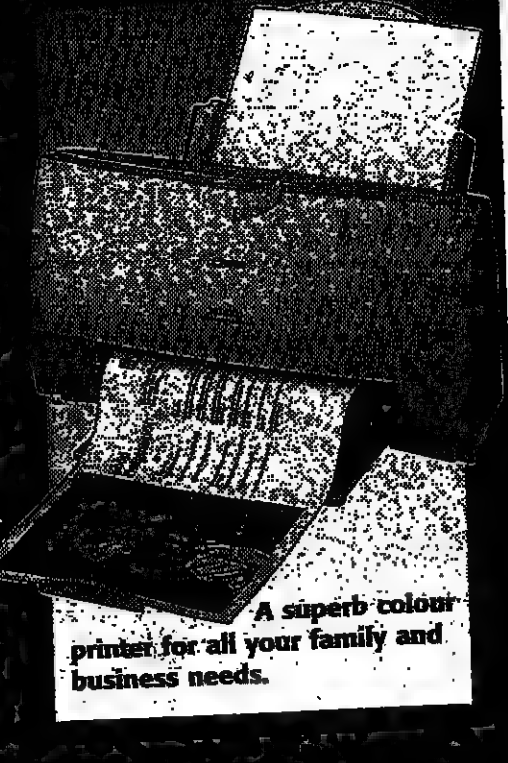
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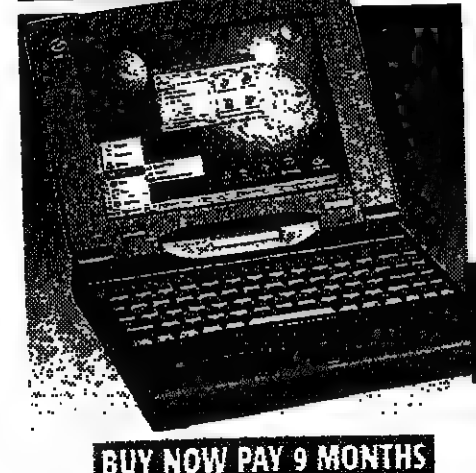
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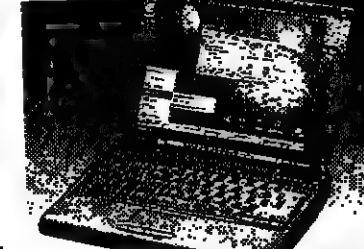
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Bacon film hit by dispute over who owns artist's words

A FILM being made about the artist Francis Bacon, starring Derek Jacobi, may be halted by the administrators of his estate. The film's director says they are claiming ownership not only of his images but also of his spoken words.

Bacon, widely considered to be the greatest British artist since Turner, died in 1992, aged 82. Filming has begun in east London on *Love is the Devil*, which is being published at the Cannes Film Festival by the British Film Institute.

John Maybury, the director, said that a year ago he showed a draft of the screenplay to the estate administrators, who objected to the entire script. "They claimed they owned everything in the script, meaning all my creative writing. They were saying you can't use them [Bacon's words]."

Maybury said the administrators — his lover John Edwards and the Marlborough Gallery in central London, which was the artist's dealer — told him that he would be taking a risk if he went ahead with the project. The director is receiving legal advice from the BFI, which is co-producing the film with the BBC.

Ben Gibson, the head of BFI production and executive producer of *Love is the Devil*, said: "We are about to have a



Dalya Alberge

in Cannes reports

on a copyright

wrangle over

Francis Bacon's

spoken phrases

meeting with the estate's lawyers on Monday. They have

no grounds for an injunction. The estate has never been

keen on the project. They have seen the script, and dialogue

has begun.

The estate administrators have asked to see the finished screenplay. Much of it is

based on interviews with Daniel Farson, Bacon's friend

and biographer. He owns the copyright to the interviews and is an adviser to the film. He removed direct quotes the artist had made to another interviewer.

A British copyright expert said yesterday that Bacon's literary and artistic works were protected by copyright, but not his casual conversations.

Robin Fry, a partner with the solicitors Stephens Innes, of central London, which specialises in intellectual property law, said: "There is no copyright in a life, only in artistic works for 70 years after death. So the filmmakers would have to have the consent of the Bacon estate to use imagery depicting his works in a film, as was the case with the recent film about Picasso."

When it came to spoken words, there was no copyright in short sentences, he said. Public lectures, prepared talks or long discourses on a particular subject might be protected in the same way as literary works.

"So if you listen to a prepared speech and write it down, then the copyright is still with the author. The same applies if Daniel Farson had asked Bacon his views on various matters and Bacon had held forth for some time without any interruption."

Interviews were a moot

point. "But if the film script is based on Farson's recollection of what Bacon said, rather than specific tape recordings in which Bacon sat down and extemporised or dictated his views, then I would say these were not protected."

Mr Fry added that such legal disputes were generally not about copyright but about censorship. "What they usually represent is the wish of one person to protect a reputation,



Celluloid portrait of the artist: scenes from the life of Francis Bacon, left, are being shot in east London with Derek Jacobi as the painter

or the views of one person of another's life."

Maybury, whose *Remembrance of Things Past* was acclaimed at the Berlin Film Festival in 1994, said that while other film biographies had attempted to rewrite history, his script did not. "This is the first film about Bacon. I really don't think it will be the last. He is far too significant to be left untouched."

The film focuses on the

1960s and 1970s and the turbulent relationship between Bacon and his lover George Dyer, who committed suicide on the eve of Bacon's triumphant retrospective at the Grand Palais in Paris.

Maybury emphasised that it was not a gay film and that there were no raunchy sex scenes.

Nobody from the Marlborough Gallery was available for comment.



Fans block road for view of The Maestro

THOUSANDS of Michael Jackson fans blocked the palm-lined Croisette in Cannes yesterday, stopping traffic and trampling through flowerbeds to get the briefest glimpse of the pop star at his hotel window.

He had flown in to Cannes for the premiere of a 20-minute film called *Ghosts* and was immediately whisked to the Carlton hotel. From time to time, he emerged from an upper floor to wave to his fans.

One young man from Grenoble, Philippe Labarthe, said "It's a kind of a dream. We need a dream." He came to Cannes just to stargaze: his hunt the day before lasted four hours but earned him sightings of Bruce Willis and Isabelle Adjani.

Another fan, Sylvie

Berneval, from Paris, was prepared to wait three hours for Jackson. Seeing him twice yesterday was not enough: she stayed put, despite being jostled by the crowds. "He was dressed in black with a red mask on his face," she said.

Ghosts is co-produced by Jackson and directed by Stan Winston, who worked on *Aliens*. The story plays on past controversies involving Jackson: a mob of angry parents, led by the Mayor of Normal Valley, make their way to an eerie mansion to confront the "mysterious occupant". The *Maestro*, "who has been entertaining their kids in a frightening fashion that they don't quite understand". Jackson plays five roles, including The *Maestro*.

Jackson album, page 35

Oldman censors his X-rated life for debut script



Oldman yesterday: "Most people need therapy"

THE actor Gary Oldman spoke yesterday of the personal experiences of violence, drugs and alcohol that compelled him to write his first film script, *Nil by Mouth*, a harrowing story of social decay, had its European premiere yesterday at the Cannes Film Festival and is tipped to win prizes.

Oldman looked close to tears as he said that writing the script had helped him to come to terms with his childhood in south London, which was overshadowed by poverty and his violent, alcoholic father. Oldman himself has undergone treatment for addiction to drink. "The sins of the father are visited on the son," he said. "We are a lot sicker than we think we are. Most people need therapy."

The film is also the directorial debut of the 39-year-old actor, renowned for performances including President Kennedy's assassin in *JFK* and a deranged drug dealer in *True Romance*.

Oldman said that some of his childhood had been too disturbing to depict in *Nil by Mouth*. He could not put on screen the moment his father beat his mother with a steel-toed boot before trying to drown her, he said, but "I watched it all".

He considered shooting the film in black and white, but wanted to avoid any hint of nostalgia. "I didn't want it clean and too pretty. I wanted it how I remembered it: grey. The sun never shone. If the sun came out, I didn't shoot."

I said, 'I do not want the sun in this movie.'"

Oldman described the characters as an amalgam of those in real life: among them his father, who "destroyed his liver" after years of drinking whisky from 9.30am to late at night, his nephew and his brother-in-law. Oldman said: "They've seen the film and were very moved. It's from my heart. I hope I've not disgraced them."

He described his mother as an heroic woman, who took two jobs — one as a pub singer — to support the family after his father left home. The film includes a recording of her singing a song from the musical *Showboat*. "She sang it at my wedding," Oldman said.

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Yeltsin compares Nato expansion to Cuba missile crisis

By ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT YELTSIN issued a warning yesterday that Nato's plans to expand eastwards had provoked the most serious dispute between Russia and the United States since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

He said on Russian television: "Since the Cuban crisis, no such acute an issue has existed in relations between Russia and the United States, and this concerns Russia's interests to such an extent that everyone, including the Europeans and Americans, should give it serious thought."



President Yeltsin at a press conference in Moscow.

During the Cuban missile crisis, Soviet nuclear brinkmanship caused the world to hold its breath, as President Kennedy battled with Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Communist leader, to prevent Moscow from installing nuclear missiles on the island.

Western diplomatic sources said that the Russian leader was resorting to strong rhetoric to appease his political opponents. He is under pressure from Communists and nationalists who argue that he is selling out his country's interests.

President Yeltsin's comparison with 1962 precedes next week's crucial meeting between Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, and Javier Solana, the Nato Secretary-General, to try to agree a special security charter between Moscow and the West.

As if to confirm his twin-track approach of berating the West over Nato expansion plans and reaching a deal on a security partnership with the alliance, Mr Yeltsin said that an agreement with Nato was nearly ready. He told reporters at a Victory Day ceremony in the Kremlin that he might join the talks in Moscow next week between Mr Primakov and Señor Solana. "About 98 per cent of the document is ready," Mr Yeltsin said.

Nato sources said that although a deal with Russia was "very close", and should be ready in time for a summit in Paris at the end of this month, final agreement was being held up by Moscow's attempts to stop the alliance from constructing any form of military infrastructure on the territory of new member states. The sources said a number of compromises were being discussed with the Russians. There was no question of Nato agreeing to abandon plans to create basic infrastructure on the territory of the new Eastern European members.

One compromise under discussion, however, was to make "a written declaration that Nato has no plans for major construction of new bases". This would be aimed at reassuring Moscow that Nato did not intend to build bunkers for tactical nuclear missiles or new garrisons for the permanent stationing of alliance troops.

Nato has already included in the draft text of an agreement a declaration that it has "no intention, no plans and no reason for deploying nuclear weapons" on the territory of the new member states.

If the negotiations in Moscow on Tuesday are successful, a "Nato-Russia Act", laying down the new strategic partnership between the alliance and Moscow, will be signed in Paris on May 27 by Nato's 16 heads of government and Mr Yeltsin.

However, opposition leaders in Russia have denounced the proposed agreement and have condemned Mr Yeltsin's Government. Gennadi Zyuganov, the Communist Party leader, said: "They have lost on every front. They are trying to fool the country and ignoring the national interest."

As a counter to Nato's expansion plans, Russia has been trying to improve relations with former Soviet republics. Negotiations are under way for economic and political union with Belarus and yesterday President Yeltsin presided over the signing of a peace memorandum between Moldova and its breakaway Russian-majority region of Transnistria.



President Chirac, at an Armistice Day ceremony yesterday, launched a forceful electoral attack on France's Socialist opposition. He has taken to using many of the familiar Blairite phrases invoking "trust" and "hope".

Blair wins French politicians' vote

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE cult of Tony Blair in France, where politicians of all shades are competing to make electoral capital out of Labour's landslide victory, reached unprecedented levels yesterday when the British Prime Minister made it to the front cover of one of France's premier celebrity magazines.

VSD, a glamour journal more used to featuring the likes of Gérard Depardieu and Juliette Binoche, featured the Blairs en famille alongside the headline "The Blair Revolution: Why his style makes Juppé and Jospin dream". It was the first time in living memory that a British Prime Minister has been accorded such an honour.

Mr Blair's thumping success is the most interesting thing to have happened so far to the French legislative elections, which have been widely dismissed as lacklustre and unnecessary. Both Alain Juppé, the Gaullist Prime Minister, and Lionel Jospin, leader of the Socialist Party, have been quick to profess ideological kinship with Mr Blair.

In a long article published this week, M Jospin insisted "the victory of the Socialist Party in France in three weeks' time, coming after that of Labour, will prove that there exists between us a 'Modern Left'. The future of Europe will be changed by it."

M Juppé's centre-right coalition, however, has pointed out that new Labour is genuinely modern, having abandoned the Socialist principles still held dear by many on the French Left. "It is true that [President] Chirac's slogan 'Less government, less taxes', might as well be Tony Blair's," noted an editorial in *Le Monde* magazine. A cartoon in *Le Monde* showed not only M Juppé and M Jospin, but also President Chirac declaring simultaneously: "C'est moi, Tony Blair" — Tony Blair, that's me.

But, as has become only too clear since M Chirac announced the snap-election in two rounds for May 29 and June 1, none of them is Mr Blair, at least not in the sense of being able to galvanise a disgruntled electorate. Up to half of French voters, according to the latest polls, are resolutely unenthused by the election campaign.

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President lays stone for church rebuilding

By RICHARD BRESTON

A SOLEMN and devout-looking President Yeltsin yesterday laid the foundation stone for the reconstruction of an ancient Moscow church that was destroyed by Stalin.

The ceremony marked the latest in a series of efforts by Russia's leadership to restore religious monuments wrecked by the Communists. Patriarch Aleksii, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, led prayers at the site of the future chapel of St Boris and St Gleb, the first Russian saints.

"In the past, more than ten Orthodox churches used to stand here in Arbat Square and they are well-remembered by Moscow believers," he said, adding: "May God grant all people of the present and future generations memory of such places."

The first church dedicated to the saints was built on the same spot in 1483 but was levelled on Stalin's orders in 1930 as part of his attempts to wipe religious symbols from the Moscow landscape.

Mr Yeltsin, whose grandsons are named Gleb and Boris, emphasised in his address that the rebuilding work lay at the heart of his attempts to reconcile modern Russia with its past. "The revival of holy shrines is the mark of our times," he said. "It is deeply symbolic that the consecration... is taking place in a year which has been proclaimed a year of reconciliation and concord in Russia," he added.



President Yeltsin at the ceremony yesterday.

Finance police seize £500m from 'hard-up' Sicilian Mafia suspect

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME AND FRANCESCO BONGARDA IN PALERMO

SICILIAN finance police yesterday seized property and assets worth well over £500 million from a suspected Mafia boss, the largest such haul since the crackdown on organised crime began four years ago.

Police said Vincenzo Piazza, 66, a building tycoon long suspected of being a highly placed figure in the Mafia, had acquired a business, land and property empire of "dizzying" proportions. He was arrested in 1994 and is still in prison awaiting trial on charges of involvement in Mafia operations. Police said it had taken them the three years since Signor Piazza's arrest to trace all his holdings.

The confiscated "assets" include 64 palaces, containing 2,500 offices; 122 warehouses; thousands of acres of agricultural land; factories and industrial units; 131 flats; £5 million of shares in a bank at Trapani; ten villas; ten school buildings; and a large estate near Siena. Signor Piazza also owned 18 cars, two of which (plus a BMW motorbike) were given back by police because they were registered in his sons' names.

Vincenzo Visco, the Finance Minister, congratulated the Palermo police on a "brilliant operation" and described the amount confiscated as unprecedented. "It defies belief that one man should have accumulated property of such incredible proportions," he said.

Signor Piazza first came to the attention of the authorities in 1989 when he declared an annual income for tax purposes of under £1,000. "This seemed at odds with his lavish lifestyle," a police spokesman said. Signor Piazza was subsequently named as a Mafia boss by two leading penitentiary supergrasses, Tommaso Buscetta and Calogero Gandi.

The crackdown on the Mafia began in earnest in 1992, after the murders of Giovanni Falcone, Italy's popular anti-Mafia judge, and his successor, Paolo Borsellino. In 1993, Salvatore "Totò" Riina, the Mafia "boss of bosses", was arrested, and last year his successor, Giovanni Brusca, was also tracked down and jailed.

Police said they were also investigating links between Signor Piazza and Vito Ciancimino, the Christian Democratic Mayor of Palermo in the 1970s.

Police yesterday said they had arrested 11 suspected leading members of the Mafia's Corleonesi clan in what could prove a further severe blow to its supremacy in the world of organised crime. (Reuters)

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Police yesterday said they had arrested 11 suspected leading members of the Mafia's Corleonesi clan in what could prove a further severe blow to its supremacy in the world of organised crime. (Reuters)

Police said they were also investigating links between Signor Piazza and Vito Ciancimino, the Christian Democratic Mayor of Palermo in the 1970s.

Toll mounts in China air crash

Beijing: A China Southern Airlines Boeing 737 crash-landed during stormy weather in the southern city of Shenzhen, killing at least 10 people and injuring 20, local officials said. The airliner was on a scheduled flight from the southwestern city of Chongqing to Shenzhen, a booming city on China's border with Hong Kong.

The cause of the crash, the first reported in China for almost three years, was unclear, but one airline official said the landing altitude of the plane was wrong. The airliner burst into flames on hitting the tarmac. The death toll was expected to rise. Ambulances ferried dead and injured passengers from the airport to hospital. (Reuters)

Circus tiger kills

Carrolltown, Pennsylvania: A 400lb Bengal tiger pounced on its trainer in front of a circus audience of at least 200 children and their families, killing him and dragging him round the ring by his neck. (AP)

Suicide plunge

Seoul: The 26-year-old wife of a defector from North Korea jumped to her death from an eighth-floor flat, her six-month-old baby in her arms, in an apparent suicide. South Korean reports said. (AFP)

Bullet proof

York, Pennsylvania: Michael Hughes, 30, who was shot as he tried to burglar a house, sat on his front porch with a bullet between his eyes waiting until police arrived. (Reuters)

Blast victims

Istanbul: One child was killed and four were hurt as a bomb they 'foisted' on an army shooting range in Turkey's eastern province of Elazir exploded when they took it home, security officials said. (Reuters)

Gandhi joins up

Delhi: Sonia Gandhi, 50, the Italian-born widow of Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister, has joined his Congress party. Since his assassination in 1991, she had refused to enter politics. (Reuters)

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Angola war fear rises as tanks go to Zaire border

FROM SAM KILEY IN KINSHASA

SEVERAL divisions of Angolan government troops, supported by helicopters and tanks, were last night massing along the Zaire border close to Matadi, the port which is Kinshasa's lifeline. Diplomats were concerned that the Angolans might be ordered to join the rebels of Laurent Kabila in an attack on Zaire's capital.

"If the two sides in Angola get any more involved in what is happening in Zaire then the civil war could kick off again for real in their own country," said a European ambassador. A fragile peace agreement was reached in Angola only last month.

Angolan government soldiers supported Zaire's rebels and routed forces of President Mobutu and his allies in a battle at Kenge, 125 miles east of Kinshasa. Soldiers from Jonas Savimbi's rival Union for the Total Independence of Angola have crossed from his territory in Lunda Norte province to join up with Zairean government forces.

Reports from Kenge said yesterday that UNITA had adopted a "scorched-earth"

policy and killed at least 200 people indiscriminately, including ten local Red Cross workers, after flying in from Dr Savimbi's territory.

This was confirmed by members of Mr Mobutu's personal entourage, who said that UNITA troops were under orders to "take no prisoners" in their efforts to hold up the rebel advance and open a

corridor to Kikwit and the diamond town of Tshikapa, close to the frontier with UNITA-held Angola.

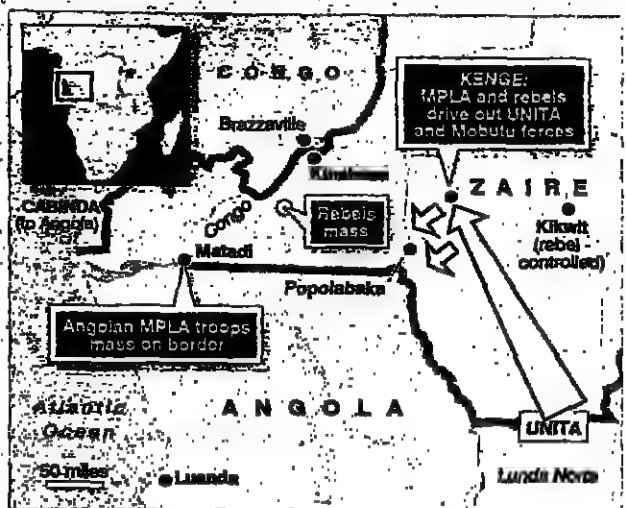
Officers from the army of the former Marxist Angolan government have been seen in Kisangani, which fell to Zaire's rebels two months ago. Closer to the front line, now 30 miles from Kinshasa, sources said that Angolan government

engineers were helping the rebels cross bridges blown over the River Wamba and were also in command of armoured vehicles.

President dos Santos of Angola is close to Mr Kabila and a sworn enemy of Mr Mobutu, who gave logistical support to UNITA for 18 years. Yesterday Mr Mobutu, 66, met the Presidents of Congo, Gabon and the Central African Republic in Libreville amid continued speculation that he would not return to Zaire, and would end his 32-year rule by fleeing into exile.

As a man whose power over the past ten years has derived from his ability to wreck opposition movements by unleashing his own troops to loot and destroy Kinshasa, Mr Mobutu is more likely to enjoy the spectacle of a conflagration in the capital.

London: Five hundred British troops and support personnel are ready to launch an evacuation from Zaire, the Foreign Office reported. It estimated 970 Britons, Commonwealth and European citizens might have to leave.



A mother and baby wait for food at a Catholic clinic in Kinshasa yesterday as the rebel advance continued

Israel claims use of force justified on terror suspects

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

ISRAEL yesterday defended its use of force on terrorist suspects, claiming the practice was justified for security forces having to deal with bombings and kidnappings.

The response came after Wednesday's examination of Israel's interrogation techniques by the United Nations Committee Against Torture, whose members questioned whether severe shaking of prisoners and subjecting them to long periods of loud music, cold air and being tied up in painful positions amounted to torture.

More than 20 Palestinians have died in Israeli prisons since 1987. Last November the Israeli Supreme Court lifted an injunction against the use of force in the interrogation of Palestinian detainees in certain cases, including potential suicide attacks. Since then, critics have accused Israel of approving torture during investigations.

Moshe Fogel, a spokesman for the right-wing Government, said last night that Israel had foiled 90 planned

attacks, including ten suicide bombings in a two-year period ending last December. "These were the result of questioning suspected terrorists during that period," Mr Fogel said.

During the UN session in Geneva, where Israel is one of a number of countries whose conduct is reviewed periodically, Peter Thomas Burns, the committee member specialising in Israel, said that the country seemed to think that standards of treatment for detainees could be modified depending on circumstances, while the standards of the Convention Against Torture were absolute.

Mr Fogel said that the committee's report was biased and failed to take into account "the fact that Israel lives in constant threat of terrorism".

House seized: Jewish settlers yesterday took over a newly acquired house on the Mount of Olives in occupied east Jerusalem in a move that infuriated Palestinians. The house was sold by an Armenian archbishop.

Jews honour Swiss guard who blew whistle on bank

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN IN NEW YORK

A TIMID Swiss nightwatchman who saved Holocaust-era ledgers from a shredder at his Zurich office has been embraced as a hero by America's powerful Jewish community.

Offers of jobs, homes and money have poured in for Christoph Meili, 28, ever since he flew in to New York this week under the auspices of the World Jewish Congress.

Mr Meili's story began in January when, on his night rounds as a guard at the Union Bank of Switzerland, he stumbled upon dustbins filled with ledgers, letters and statements of account in the bank's shredding "robot".

On closer examination, he discovered the date back to the 1930s, and 1948 and to certain mainline Jewish clients.

Speaking yesterday at a gathering here, he said: "I thought to myself 'Wait a minute! This is historical material!'" He took several armfuls of documents to his car and later passed them on to a Jewish cultural organisation in Zurich.

Mr Meili has disclosed that he was inspired to save the documents after having seen Schindler's List. "A few months before, I had seen the movie. And that is how, when I saw these documents, I

realised I must take the responsibility, that I must do something."

The watchman, a father of two, was suspended from his job by the bank, which accused him of violating its secrecy laws. He was questioned by the Swiss police, who are believed to have handled him roughly, ostracised by friends and shunned by other prospective employers. He and his family also received a number of death threats.

The World Jewish Congress, alerted to his plight, arranged to fly him and his family to New York. He has been offered job receptions in the city and in Washington. Edgar Bronfman, the chairman of the congress and president of the Seagram company, has offered him a full-time job — as a nightwatchman.

□ Buenos Aires: Under pressure from the United States and Israel, Argentina was said last night to be on the verge of naming a commission to look into its Nazi ties during and after the Second World War. A commission of key Argentinian officials and foreigners would be on the commission, according to sources, who said a formal announcement was imminent. (AFP)

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Yemen tests wisdom of a Solomon with claim to Queen of Sheba



The Queen of Sheba: icon for tourist chiefs

SHE is said to have ruled almost 3,000 years ago, but she is as bewitching to modern historians as she was to King Solomon. And she has left a legacy that has so divided two neighbours that only Solomon would be able to answer the all-important question: did the Queen of Sheba come from Yemen or Ethiopia?

Emperor Haile Selassie, the "Lion of Judah", insisted that the Queen, known in Ethiopia as Makeda, married Solomon and was a founding member of the Ethiopian royal dynasty. She is said to have lived at Axum, a site now being investigated by three teams of archaeologists who claim to have found coins, bones and other relics of her reign. The

more popular and familiar claim comes from the other side of the Red Sea.

The Yemeni Government, opening up the rugged and remote country to international tourism as well as Western business and communications, insists that the legendary ruler, known in Arabic as Balkis or Bilkis, has the sanction of the Koran as well as popular support for her genealogy. Her name is now prominent in all Yemeni tourist brochures, and the main hotel in Sanaa, the capital, is named after her.

"She is certainly Yemeni. But legend states that she crossed Ethiopia on her way back from Jerusalem," Dr Hussein al-Amri, Yemen's Ambassador to London, said.

Commercial hopes are adding to rival claims from both sides of the Red Sea about the origins of the beguiling biblical beauty, Michael Binyon reports

He cited extensive research by two recent doyens of Arabic at Oxford and Cambridge, the late Professor Freddie Beeston and the late Professor Bob Serjeant, who spent time researching Yemeni epigraphy.

Each country advances whatever historical evidence it can. Ethiopia claims a tradition going back to Josephus, commonly accepted in Europe in the Middle Ages, that she was African. At Chartres, for example, she is

shown with an African servant, and a persistent legend gives her a malformed foot — or even the hooves of an ass.

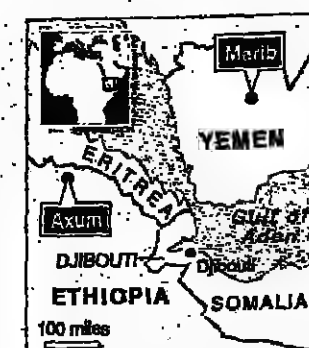
Legend says that she hid her feet in a long gown, but Solomon was said to have been so curious about this that he had a glass floor built before his throne and Bilkis, thinking that it was water, raised her skirt to cross it and revealed that her legs were hairy.

Yemen relies more on her

visit to Jerusalem when she gave King Solomon gifts of gold and spices, products for which Yemen, then an important trading centre, was famous. Until recently the country, racked by civil war for almost a generation and then under various Marxist governments, would not allow in Western archaeologists; now they are arriving in droves to search for lost remains.

The Queen is mentioned little in the Bible. It verses in the First Book of Kings, repeated in the Second Book of Chronicles. The story is believed to come from Jewish tradition.

Ancient legend makes an enormous difference to a country's tourist potential. Egypt markets its history



who have discovered ancient caravan routes through their territory.

American excavations in Yemen began in 1952, when Wendell Phillips, the explorer, began investigations into the Moon Temple of Sheba at Marib, the town mentioned in the Koran as being her seat where she is said to have built an ancient dam.

Tourism has been the spur that has levered reluctant agreement by many governments for Western scholars to mount expeditions. Perhaps the most famous search is for the legendary site where Noah's Ark came to rest, reputedly on the slopes of Mount Ararat in Turkey.

Queen of Africa, page 20

Consortium woos Taleban to tap energy bonanza

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS IN KANDAHAR

AN INTERNATIONAL oil and gas consortium is renting an office in the impoverished mud city of Kandahar, headquarters of the Taleban Islamic militia. It confirms the driving force behind Afghanistan's latest war: money.

The consortium is seeking a stake in what may be the world's last land-based oil and gas bonanza. Afghanistan excites no interest in international boardrooms, but the Central Asian states to its north are a multibillion-pound prospect. They contain vast, untapped reserves of oil and gas; Afghanistan, cursed as ever by its location, is in the way.

The world will begin suffering a decline in oil production within 20 years, a leading scientist is warning (Nick Nuttall writes).

Demand for energy from rich and developing countries is accelerating so fast that oil-producing nations will not be able to keep pace by 2015, Craig Hatfield, of the University of Toledo, says in the journal *Nature*. The geologist says that discoveries are falling to keep pace with demand, which grew by 16 per cent from 1985 to 1995.

doms that have kept the country at war. It is also backed by Pakistan. Both countries would benefit substantially from construction of the pipelines. Never has such a rag-tag fundamentalist militia been so vital to such powerful international economic interests.

Delta Oil, of Saudi Arabia, has entered into a partnership with Unocal, the American oil and gas giant, to build pipelines at a cost of \$2.7 billion. The scheme would take three years to complete.

Rival influences, however, are determined to scuttle the project. Russia fears it would lead to foreign economic domination of a region it regards as its backyard. That partly explains why it provides military assistance to General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the northern Uzbek warlord and Taleban's main armed rival.



Wreckage of the Pakistan Air Force Mirage fuel tanks which were jettisoned on a densely populated area of Karachi yesterday. An inquiry has been ordered

Seven die as jet discards fuel

FROM REUTERS IN KARACHI

A PAKISTAN Air Force jet jettisoned its fuel tanks over a residential area of Karachi yesterday, causing a fire that killed at least seven people and injured six, police said.

The pilot of the Mirage fighter, which landed safely at an air force base, dumped the

tanks after the plane developed engine trouble on a routine training flight, a military spokesman said.

Witnesses said fire broke out when one of the fuel tanks fell on Gharibabad, a heavily populated residential area in Karachi's Central District. An

air force statement said that the pilot had to jettison tanks to avoid crashing on a populated area, and causing a major catastrophe. It said an inquiry had been ordered.

Most of the injured were in a critical condition with 50 to 60 per cent burns.

Jailing of abbot reasserts China's grip on Tibet

FROM JONATHAN MURSKY IN HONG KONG

THE jailing of one of Tibet's supreme monks this week marks China's determination to dominate events in the Himalayan state. The sentencing of abbot Chadrul Rimpoche also signals an end to a brief Chinese attempt earlier this decade at a reconciliation with the Dalai Lama. Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader.

In an announcement this week Beijing said the abbot of the Tashilumpo, one of Tibet's main monasteries and the base of the Panchen Lama, the second-highest Buddhist leader after the Dalai Lama, had been jailed on April 21 for "splitting the country", stirring up trouble among ethnic groups, leaking state secrets, and for "colluding with the Dalai Lama". He was jailed for six years.

of picking the successor to the present 60-year-old Dalai Lama. That move gathered pace in the early 1990s when Li Peng, the Prime Minister and a hardliner on Tibet, fell ill. Then, others in the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy agreed that the legitimacy of the Panchen Lama would be enhanced among Tibetans if the Dalai Lama approved his succession.

A letter was passed to the Dalai Lama in 1993, through his brother who lives in Hong Kong, stating that the Dalai Lama's sanction for the next Panchen Lama would be sought. But when Mr Li regained his health in 1994, that attempt to co-operate with the Dalai Lama was ended.

The Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in India yesterday condemned the sentence. The abbot was arrested last year and charged, along with two monks, with giving the Dalai Lama a list of 25 names of children who could be reincarnations of the tenth Panchen Lama who died in 1989. The Dalai Lama designated one of the boys as the eleventh Panchen Lama, and soon after the child was found and the abbot disappeared.

It was then that the list of names, probably sent by the abbot, reached the Dalai Lama in India. It stipulated that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, six, was the likely incarnation, and the Dalai Lama publicly confirmed him as the eleventh Panchen Lama, angering China. Beijing, promptly found another boy in the list, Gyaincain Norbu, and in 1995 installed him as the Panchen Lama. Since then China has never agreed to the Dalai Lama as a "religious leader" but only as a criminal.

Hong Kong activists to fight on

Hong Kong Pro-democracy activists planning protests to mark the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 vowed that the handover of the colony to China would not stop future demonstrations.

"We will still hold the gathering even if they ban it," Szeto Wah, a campaigner, said yesterday.

They also plan to display in a Hong Kong park a 26ft sculpture entitled the *Pillar of Shame*, by Jed Galschot, a Danish artist, that depicts the bodies of 50 people killed in the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

Tokyo votes to protect rights of AINU minority

FROM ROBERT WHYMAN IN TOKYO

AFTER a century of exploitation, Japan pledged yesterday to safeguard the human rights of the AINU, an aboriginal people concentrated in the northernmost island of Hokkaido.

The lower house of parliament adopted a new law to protect and promote the AINU culture and traditions, virtually destroyed by Japan's historical policy of stamping out the native heritage.

aboriginal race as the ethnic minority had demanded. Japanese leaders feared that recognising them as aborigines would unleash a flood of claims for land and mineral rights. The AINU have been systematically deprived of their land, without compensation, and pushed into small pockets of Hokkaido since the late 1800s.

According to official figures, about 25,000 AINU now live in Hokkaido. But AINU activists say there are twice that

number, because many prefer to conceal their identity to escape discrimination.

Shigeru Kayano, Japan's first and only AINU member of the upper house of parliament, said the new law did not satisfy his people's demand for the return of land appropriated over the centuries, but added that it was "better than nothing". The law replaces legislation enacted in 1990 which sought to wipe out AINU culture, even restricting their right to catch salmon in Hokkaido rivers.

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'We are grateful for what the Tories did, but it is not the end of the story'

Can Frank Field solve the problems of the welfare state?

How times change. When I last interviewed Frank Field, in the 1980s, he was a lone backbencher in a crewneck sweater and we talked over a plate of spaghetti in an eatery one step up from a greasy spoon. In the unconstructed Labour Party he was a voice in the wilderness, a supporter of Tory reforms. Mrs Thatcher had declared her respect for him, "a good man".

Field's future seemed hopeless. He was stuck in an unelectable party which, if it ever got into government, would never offer him a job because he could not be one of them. Not only did he think the unthinkable, he spoke it, with a whispered intensity.

Yet here he is today, grey-haired, 54, in a ministerial suit, occupying a splendid panelled office in Richmond House, Whitehall, with three

tall Gothic windows and two sofas plushly upholstered in cream. "I feel I have come home," he says.

Not many new ministers come to the job having already written 10 books on their subject, three in the last three years: *An Agenda for Britain*, *Making Welfare Work* and *How to Pay for the Future*. The titles tell you everything really. If we want the welfare state we will have to pay for it differently. Mr Blair has underscored his enthusiasm for Field's views by making him minister for the reform of welfare.

What Field always understood was that the social security system shaped people's behaviour, and must be subject to moral scrutiny. He said it was asinine to separate benefit offices from jobcentres: why give benefit to those not seeking work? He said Labour should have sold council

houses, reformed the trade unions, introduced school tests: why were so many school-leavers unable to read or write, when there were no jobs for illiterate youths any more? He pointed out that people enjoy saving: it gives them control over their lives; why were they penalised for having a nest-egg? Welfare should be a springboard, not a prison. The Labour Party was "completely out of touch with reality", "short on street cred", "politically infantile", "unelectable".

Long before it was politically acceptable, he wrote about the underclass, habitual dependency, and fraudsters. The social security system, with by far the biggest budget in Britain, had become rotten and ruinous, discouraging savings, encouraging untruth, undermining honesty and effort. For years, he told us housing benefit was a sitting duck for organised gangsters who used the system as a personal merchant bank. He knows of landlords drawing more than £1 million a year in housing benefit, most of it fraudulent.

The Tories took an unconscionable long time to start

countering fraud, and much of the running was made by the Commons Select Committee on Social Security, which Field chaired for ten years. (He was terrific in the Maxwell hearings.) Peter Lilley had started getting tough, but Field promises to be tougher. "We are most grateful for what the last government did, but it's the beginning of the story, not the end. The media has always accused Joe Bloggs of committing fraud; but the biggest gains for the taxpayer will come when we deal with the big boys, the gangsters or 'businessmen' as they call themselves." When will that be? "On day three in this office, Valerie, I have not yet got a plan agreed by government."

But with the alacrity characteristic of the new regime, briefings from civil servants in the DSS began on Bank Holiday Monday, he says he has learnt much already.

Field grew up in a working-class Tory at St Clement Danes Grammar School in West London. His father worked for 48 years building carbon blocks at Morgan Crucible. "He got up every day, coughing his lungs out, hating his job, but he never went sick, never let them down." After 48 years they gave him £1 for every year of employment. The now radicalised Frank read economics at Hull, and served a long, dedicated apprenticeship as director of the Child Poverty Action Group.

He lives alone in a neat, book-lined flat in Westminster. In Birkbeck he rents a Georgian property in a pretty square. He wanted to buy there too, but he could never be sure he would hang onto his majority: in the 1980s the local Labour militants were determined to dislodge him. What has become of those Tories? "We got them out," he says, looking foxey. "It's called not turning the other cheek." He now has a 21.843 majority (swing: 8.5 per cent).

He is a priestly and contemplative soul, a former member of the General Synod ("desecrated because I was unsound on women priests"), a Christian first, a politician second, who once slept on the streets to



Frank Field: "For the whole of my political life, Labour has espoused a view of human nature which is simply wrong. The self-regarding side has been ignored or suppressed"

THE VALERIE GROVE INTERVIEW



were only motivated by altruism. That's because they were so bewildered and angry: it is just not how the world works.

"Our job now is to show how self-interest — a natural and wholesome instinct, the greatest driving force in all of us — can also promote the common good. The last government failed to distinguish between self-interest and selfish greed. If people are worrying about their future, their children's future, the care of their elderly parents, they won't have time or sympathy

for more vulnerable people. Our aim must be to make them so happy that we can win their support for other people, less fortunate."

He is determined to wean us all off the "ration-book economy" and into a more collective arrangement. We shall all be obliged to make secondary pension provision, to run alongside universal state provision. How far this plan differs from Peter Lilley's remains to be seen. "What the Tories published was the demise of the state pension. We want the sharp elbows of the middle class seeing this as a jolly useful first step in building an adequate retirement income, even if they've got another pension. But people will not be prepared to make that second pension provision if they think politicians have got their sticky fingers on it — so we must encourage the expansion of existing mutual bodies which have nothing to do with the State. We do have a history, a tradition of doing things collectively, before the State took over."

Some accuse him of abandoning his traditional interests. They remember that during the last Labour government, before he became an MP, he was tireless in reminding us of the existence of hungry latchkey children. But he has never lost sight of protecting the weakest, the oldest, the poorest, the genuine underdog.

I reminded him that he once told me that if he ever got into government he would prefer

the Irish office, "because it ought to be held by a non-family man, in case he got blown up." A saintly thought. What does he say now?

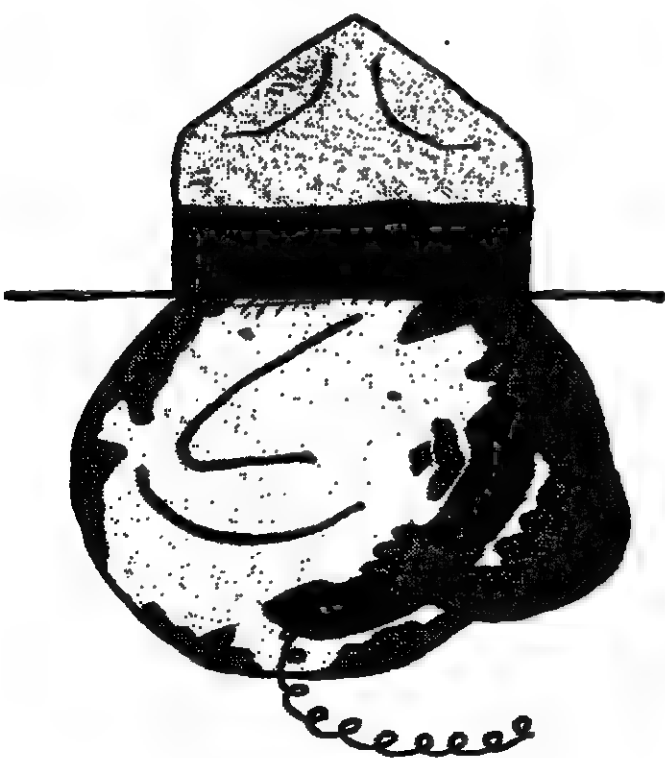
He said he was delighted to have this job and was determined to make a success of it. I said I rather hoped for a more fiery response. "People have always categorised me as one who was born to be the outsider. In fact I've been a passionate insider, obliged to be on the outside, but who wanted to play a part in making my party electable. There are enormous advantages in being on the back benches, but there are privileges and duties which come with being in government."

"My critics thought I would never be able to make the transition, that I would not last two days. But on day-three I can tell you it's the most natural thing in the world to me, to be in this wonderful room." (Previous occupants: Sir Nicholas Scott, William Hague.) "I want to maximise each minute in this job. I love it. It's my life. It feels like coming home."

Crossing Trafalgar Square afterwards, who should I run into, but my old friend Alan Brien, Sunderland-born author of *Lenny*, the novel "Frank Field: the barrister-phile." "Dismissing the welfare state, suppose." Oh dear, I see the diehards of old Labour have yet to be won over.

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Welfare should be a springboard, not a prison

He says, with a beaming smile, what a wonderful experience it was to be on the winning side, for once not having to apologise for his party's manifesto. In his books and pamphlets he repeatedly suggested ways in which the Labour Party could "leapfrog the Tory agenda" and start setting its own. "We have now leapt," he says.

He is a priestly and contemplative soul, a former member of the General Synod ("desecrated because I was unsound on women priests"), a Christian first, a politician second, who once slept on the streets to

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The day they let the authors out of their studies

Any writer worth his salt had to be at Hatchards' bicentennial bash, says Joseph Connolly

The literary agent Ed Victor once famously suggested that the prime source of discontent on the part of wannabe authors and those denied access to the inner corridors of "Literary London" was the deep-seated and resentful belief that all the high-powered deals are conducted by a small circle of friends in and around the Groucho Club, and that all literary parties revolved around the same handful of OK writers: and naturally, he concluded, these malcontents have got it dead-right.

Nowhere is this, maybe better illustrated than at the most eagerly anticipated and effortlessly stylish literary bash of them all — the annual Authors of the Year party at Hatchards in Piccadilly. Traditionally held at the end of April, the latest effort was even more glittering than usual for this year is Hatchards' 200th birthday. If you were a writer worth your salt you just had to be there and, if not, it was imperative to make it somehow known (anywhere that matters) that you were invited, of course you were, but — something even grander had prevented you from attending (and about a quick dubbing at Buck House, it is difficult to think quite what).

The unique thing about this party is that 95 per cent of the guest list comprises bona fide writers — the odd diarist apart. Journalists, PRs and paparazzi are actively discouraged. That said, the mix of people is quite extraordinary: where else could you find the author of *Waterhouse Down*, Richard Adams, in earnest conversation with Salman Rushdie — A.S. Byatt wading in to make up the triangle? I had great fun chatting to Salman (one of the most sane, humorous and down-to-earth of authors) about everything from publishers (but of course) to clothes, beads — having one is nicer than having two — and the excitement he was feeling at the prospect of

the following night's election bash, round at Martin Amis's place.

Fuelling myself on more of the excellent and endless champagne, I sidled off for a word with Jilly Cooper — weaving my way through characters as diverse as Antonio Carluccio, Lord Owen, Jane Asher, Julian Barnes, Colin Thubron and T.S. Eliot's widow, all in their way, apparently having a whale of a time.

Jilly seems to remember me mainly on the strength of a review I once gave one of her books, oh God — years ago. In it I suggested that her next should centre on the Henley Regatta and be called *Rowlocks*. She called me *Rowlocks*, now I think she means it kindly. Jilly was quite one of the most attractive women there — she can't be 60, can she? She looks early 40s, tops.



Joseph Connolly and Salman Rushdie

and gorgeous with it. There is a tremendous feeling of release and clean good fun at the Hatchards party — I think in part because, contrary to how it may appear, even the most eminent writers don't get out all that much. It's an upside down world, the writing game — when you're on show, slipping bubbles, you are not working (although novelists might debate that; when you are locked in at home, though — howling at the moon and maybe getting the words down, in the outside world you might as well not exist).

Louise Doughty and Deborah Moggach, certainly seemed as delighted as schoolgirls on half-term — Debbie supplying the inevitable "publisher horror story": a fan had confided that she had been disappointed with her last one — "it rather left you up in the air," she'd thought. Debbie — with typical authorial modesty — grovelled her apology, only to find out that the last two chapters had been omitted from the print run; 40,000 paperback copies were pulped, and no more was said. (When publishers blunder, little is ever said.)

The wheels of the party were as usual stylishly oiled by Hatchards' manager, Roger Katz — he steers the right people together, avoids possible confrontations and treats everyone as a star (easier, mind you, when practically everyone is). Do you remember last year, he asked me, when Iris Murdoch and Vikram Seth were deeply engaged in philosophical discourse for the entire duration of the party? I do — I was far too terrified to even approach — and was anyway chatting to the fab and thrilling Joan Collins (she can't be 60, can she? My God, these young women today have a thing or two to learn).

Defiantly dodging some damn female who had given my last novel, *Stuff*, a shall we say, less than glowing review (Rowlocks to her), I found myself talking to Elizabeth Jane Howard, whom I last met maybe 18 years ago when she was living in Hampstead with Kingsley Amis. In the days when he and I used to have the odd pub lunch together. She remembered those times, but was maybe not keen to disinter them; she further seemed very eager to talk to Louis de Bernières who, I could have told her, wasn't there. She asked me over to meet Beryl Bainbridge (who was smoking for England) but on the way (it's that sort of party) I encountered all sorts of other folk — Nico Ladenis (quite the reverse of the stern and rather intimidating figure he initially appears, though quite fed up with the

likes of Conrad headbanging his workforce) and Bernice Rubens (who was smoking for Europe); Bernice was the winner of the Booker Prize more than a quarter of a century ago, before it became so terminally glam. She wanted us to slide back over to her friend Salman, but was reluctant while Richard Adams still hovered.

As the hours wear on, authors' parties don't tend to this out very much; they really like it, once it gets going. Over there is One Fat Lady, Jennifer Paterson, hitting the canapés — just in front of thriller writer Robert Goodard, slightly miffed that he wasn't allowed to write the latest film adaptation of one of his novels. Nor was he shown the finished result. He was, however, — as writers learn to be — philosophical. You never lose sight of the fact that you're only a writer.

Roger Katz was now gently deflecting a publisher (how did he get in, folks were heard to mutter) who must remain as nameless as he was almost legless — and gradually the message was filtering down that it was maybe time to drift away. Quite a few guests were leaving — there go Sir Ludovic and Lady Kennedy, and gone, too, are P.D. James and Lord Jenkins (individually, it has to be said). Colin Dexter, Sebastian Faulks, Nicholas Evans, Donald Sinden, Hammond Innes — all floating back to their lairs.

To some of us, though, going home is impossible — what you do is gather together a band of like-minded souls and go on somewhere, and where better than the Groucho Club? Because Ed Victor had it right, you know — just as Hatchards is not so much a bookshop (more a way of life), the same is true of the Groucho. The danger is, of course, it's a way of life that scribblers can become addicted to — because although it really is true that they don't actually get out all that much — getting them back in again can be an absolute nightmare.

• *Stuff* is published by Faber & Faber at £14.99.



Falling stars: Bolshoi performers were once feted around the world but on a disastrous trip to Las Vegas last year they often faced empty theatres

Russia's dying swan

The Bolshoi's artistic director aims to put the ailing company back on its feet, says Richard Beeston

From his grand office in the Bolshoi Theatre, Vladimir Vasiliev can see and feel the changes under way in the heart of Russia's greatest cultural treasure. Entombed in scaffolding and crawling with workmen, the imposing neoclassical building is being repaired and renovated to give the 200-year-old institution a new lease of life into the next millennium.

But as the former acclaimed dancer and now artistic director nervously pushes back his shock of blond hair, it is not the exterior of the Bolshoi that troubles him. Damaged walls can be repaired, but how can the demoralised, overstuffed and cash-strapped Bolshoi be re-established as one of the world's great centres of performing arts?

Two years ago when he was appointed to his job, replacing a Soviet-era director whose leadership style was most often compared with Stalin's, Vasiliev introduced a sense of hope that the Bolshoi would one day regain its reputation as the world's greatest ballet.

He promised to bring in star conductors and dancers. He vowed to thin out the staff of more than 2,000 and pledged to inject a new spirit of pride and optimism after years in the artistic doldrums. The promises, which followed the first strike in the Bolshoi's history by disgruntled dancers, may have sounded persuasive but Vasiliev concedes he still has a long way to go.

"At the Bolshoi, it is always the case that the problems are bolshoi (big) as well," says Vasiliev who, despite his double-breasted suit and managerial job, still moves with the grace of a dancer. "I sometimes think we need a few more of the dictatorial methods to run this place."

One of his first moves was to stage his own version of Tchaikovsky's classic *Swan*

Lake, which involved several dramatic revisions, including eliminating a central character. The production was panned by critics and ballet lovers. A critic for the weekly *Vek* wrote: "What remains is a banal family drama packed in swan's feathers." The howls of protest over the new production were followed by a disastrous tour abroad, the latest in a series of trips to the West dogged by poor ticket sales and bad reviews.

The sad state of the Bolshoi is revealed in *Dancing for Dollars*, a two-part documentary, the first of which is to be aired at 9pm this Sunday on Channel Four. It follows the tragic, and at times comic, escapades of the company on a tour of Las Vegas last year.

Predictably, the visit was a flop and American investors lost more than £1 million as the dancers performed to empty seats. At one point an American promoter suggests, half in jest, that the only way to attract audiences is to perform naked.

The film is most striking when it contrasts today's pathetic performance with the Bolshoi's landmark tour of 1959, when fans slept on the streets to get tickets. In one poignant moment, Raisa

Struchkova, a ballerina who took part in both tours, recalls how audiences in New York threw so many bouquets that she "walked on flowers all the way to our hotel".

Vasiliev ponders these criticisms with a heavy heart. "I was crushed by the reviews of *Swan Lake*, but I am convinced that, in time, I will be vindicated," he says, adding that he is working on a new version of the classic *Giselle*. "As for the tour of America, it was badly organised and I did not have proper control. That will not happen again."

He vows that with time and effort, the Bolshoi will once again astound audiences around the world. "What I am concentrating on now is building up the key elements of a great company, the orchestra, the ballet, the opera and so on," he says. "It sounds Utopian, but it can be done and I have set myself a target of the beginning of the millennium."

His confidence is greeted with suspicion by his staff. Gediminas Taranda, an acclaimed dancer at the Bolshoi, says that performers are still not clear whether Vasiliev has what is needed to restore lost greatness. "The morale is better. The organisation is better. But the repertoire is uninspired," he says. "Although we were promised world-class performers from the West, not one has come in two years. There is a sense that Vasiliev is not doing enough to promote the talented dancers and create his own stars."

But Vasiliev remains philosophical and says that the Bolshoi is simply a reflection of Russia today. Just as President Yeltsin is criticised as he attempts to reform the country in the face of corruption,

bureaucracy and the mafia, so Vasiliev is hounded by the volatile artistic community as he struggles with the mafia's grip of ticket sales, a bloated administration and a general

resistance to change. For those who love the Bolshoi, Vasiliev is for the time being the only man capable of saving the theatre. The only fear is that, like his famous dancing role of Spartacus, his efforts will end in tragedy.

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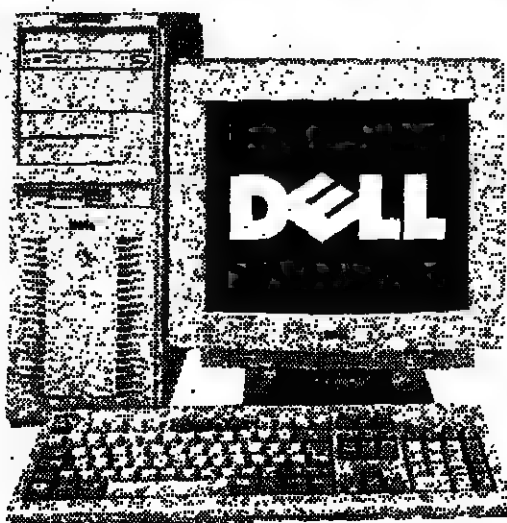
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Enter the three Tory musketeers

Daniel Johnson wants younger bloods to refresh a weary party

The Tory party badly needs cheering up. An unedifying beauty contest of redundant Cabinet ministers, in which all the candidates feel bound to engage in competitive boasting, is unlikely to do the trick. Time was when modesty and reticence were taken for granted, and even unintentional showmanship was ruthlessly punished. Consider Quintin Hogg (now Lord Hailsham), who renounced his peerage in 1963 to run for the leadership, only to ruin his chances with a public appearance feeding his baby. Innocent, even endearing as it seems today, this was then seen as showing off. Even Douglas Hurd's attempt to play down his privileged background during the war of the Thatcherite succession in 1990 was taken amiss: if there is one thing worse than immodesty, it is false modesty.

Andrew Lansley, Tim Collins, John Bercow, Crispin Blunt. Most are on the centre-right. Perhaps none of these more or less gifted chaps (and the party should be worried by the lack of women) is quite out to lead the Tory revival. If one includes the 1992 crop, though, I recognise three Conservatives with real star quality: David Willetts, Iain Duncan Smith and Oliver Letwin.

Of the three, only Willetts has so far held ministerial office, though that ended painfully. The bad taste left by his notorious note which led to his resignation less than six months ago may be too fresh for him to take the Commons by storm yet, but he remains one of the best parliamentary speakers on the Tory benches, and one of the party's most fluent writers. Humbled and hardened by adversity, he should shine in opposition. He has yet to lose his egghead image, but Labour has a healthy respect for him. He has vanquished Mandelson, formerly his opposite number, at the dispatch box.

The Tories need a class act, not a salon des refusés

No doubt the new leader will emerge from among the papabile, those who sat in the Major Cabinets. Portillo, Rifkind or Patten could even join the list if the Uxbridge by-election is held in time. But there is room for a thinker-cum-orator, if not a messiah — a Macleod, if not a Thatcher — from the other ranks.

For that the Tories must look to their new blood. Those who entered the Commons in 1992, and particularly those elected only last week, are likely to be better able to adapt to opposition than those who have spent much of the past 18 years in government and share the blame for defeat.

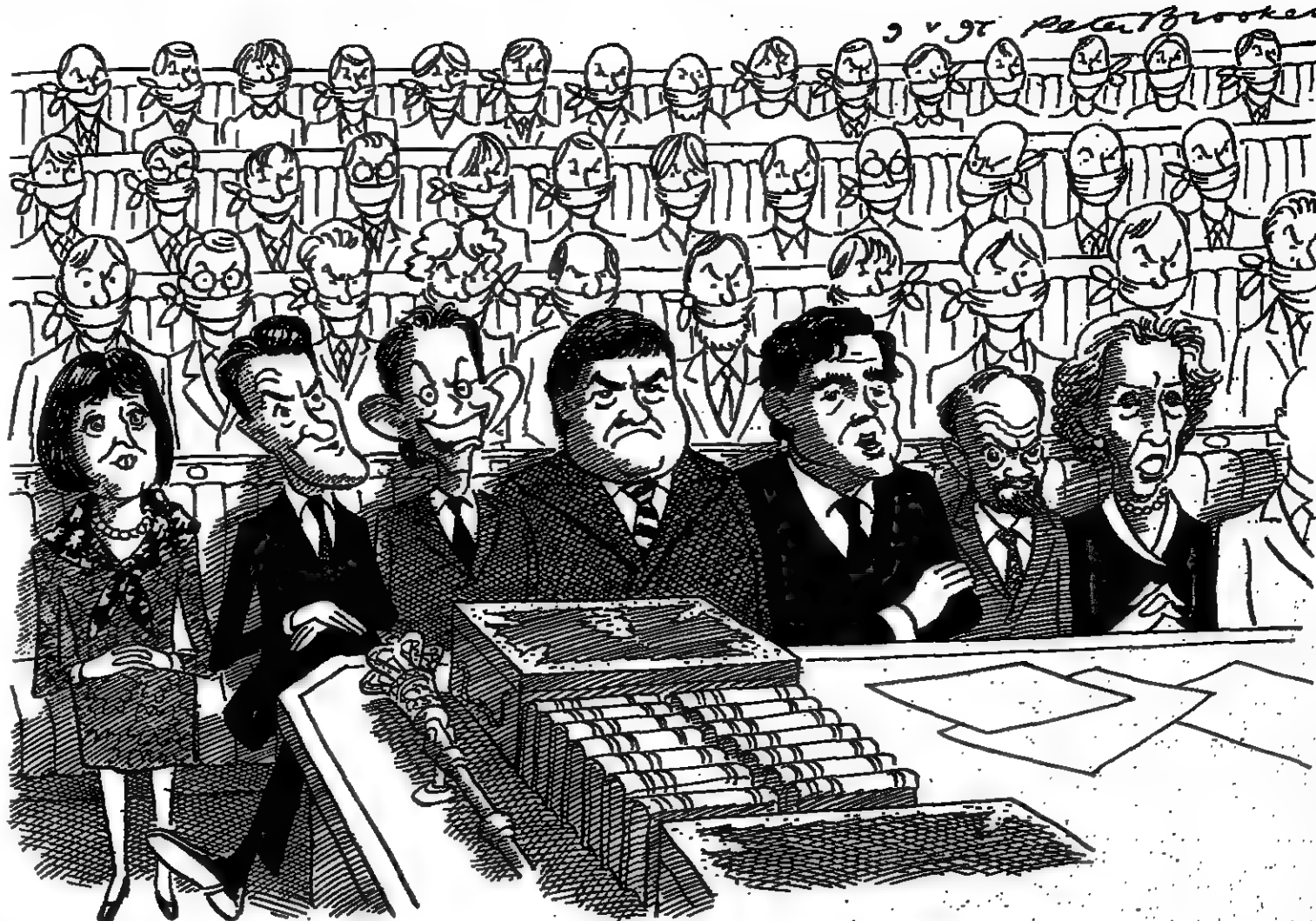
Above all, the party needs another F.E. Smith. In the aftermath of a comparable catastrophe in 1906, when even the Prime Minister, A.J. Balfour, lost his seat, Smith's maiden speech put fire back into Tory bellies. That is the signal that not only MPs but disillusioned Tory and ex-Tory voters are waiting for: new statesmen to capture their imagination, restore their confidence and mount a cogent philosophical response to New Labour's victory. Now that Tony Blair has appropriated the Thatcherite legacy, the Tory party has to ask itself what it is for, and begin the slow reconquest of the cities, Scotland and Wales, the North, the West and the Midlands. It must also avoid the Jacobite temptation.

There is no shortage of talent or political experience among the new intake. Some of those who have just returned to Westminster have already held office with distinction: Francis Maude, John Maupers, Christopher Chope, Michael Fallon. Others have achieved much outside politics, such as Archie Norman, that remarkable businessman, and Shaun Woodward, the former producer of *Newsnight* and *Panorama* — a potential Tory Mandelson. Then there are the ambitious advisers, all of them brilliant, David Ruffley, Andrew Tyrie, Julian Lewis,

about Europe were never headed, but proved prescient. What impresses many who meet him is the natural authority of a former army officer — a rarity in today's Tory party. Duncan Smith inherited Norman Tebbit's seat at Chingford, and has something of his taste for telling the party home truths. Lord Tebbit himself sees Duncan Smith as his "godson", and Baroness Thatcher admires his swash-buckling style.

The new boy is Oliver Letwin. It took him ten years to enter the Commons: from Stoke Newington via Hampstead to West Dorset. The son of eminent American dons, Letwin is a unique fusion of Cambridge and Chicago. He left a glittering academic career to rescue Sir Keith Joseph when he was marooned at the Education Department. At the No 10 Policy Unit he was one of Margaret Thatcher's best brains. When John Redwood became an MP, Letwin succeeded him at N.M. Rothschild's privatisation unit: he has run it successfully for ten years. The party needs a philosopher to make the case against a Government that has stolen most of its ideas: it could be Letwin.

Willetts, Letwin and Duncan Smith are mature, solid family men in their early forties, with backgrounds in, respectively, the Civil Service, the City and the Services. Whoever wins the leadership, this triumvirate deserves a place in any future Shadow Cabinet. Willetts has declared for Lilley, Duncan Smith for Redwood: Letwin could vote for either. All three see Europe as the great issue of the day, and oppose the single currency on principle. New Labour have hijacked the *Zeitgeist*, but these three musketeers are still the cutting edge of Conservatism.



In praise of quangos

E.M. Forster was right: two cheers for democracy is quite enough

The little girl who asked "How can I know what I think until I hear what I say?" spoke truer than she knew. As an adolescent, I used to suppose that one must consult one's beliefs, then put them into action. With age has come the realisation that we must act, examine our actions, then work out what we believe.

Applying this rule to the near-unanimous reception given to the Chancellor's decision to cede interest rate policy to the Bank of England, it becomes apparent that, as we near the end of the 20th century, the British political Establishment's confidence in democracy is on the wane. We have, after all, little more than 60 years' experience of government by full universal adult suffrage. Abroad, the system has found favour in only a minority of countries and in many it does not seem to be working. At home it is too early to offer more than a preliminary judgment on the experiment. The preliminary judgment is sceptical.

I thought Norman Lamont put it best. As a former Chancellor, he congratulated Gordon Brown on Tuesday's decision. "Interest rates," he said, "should not be in the hands of politicians, who are subject to all kinds of pressures."

Hear, hear to that! But how very illuminating. So politicians are "subject to all kinds of pressures," are they? Indeed they are. Politicians are subject to one particular "pressure": a tiresome distraction, relentless, and unremitting: the pressure to win elections.

Mr Lamont is not the first politician to notice how degrading the influence of popular opinion can be. Plutarch reports that in 150 BC the Athenian general and statesman Phocion, on being clapped and cheered by his audience, turned to his friend Diogenes Laertius and remarked "have I inadvertently said something foolish?" Juvenal observed: "The people long eagerly for just two things: bread and circuses." Jonathan Swift thought that "the bulk of mankind is as well qualified for flying as for thinking." Samuel Butler agreed. "The public buys its opinions as it buys its meat, or takes in its milk: on the principle that it is cheaper to do this than to keep a cow." Asked what might impress the common people of France, Talleyrand replied, "Well, you might try getting crucified and rising again on the third day." Said George Burns: "Too bad that all the people who know how to run the country are

busy driving cabs or cutting hair." Do not misunderstand. I share this suspicion of democracy and am not trying to mock. I'm with Phocion, Juvenal, Butler, Swift, Talleyrand, Burns, Lamont and Brown on this. There is much to be said for the opinion that the pressure to please the public subverts good administration. I only observe that it is a rather large opinion with consequences beyond the management of interest rates. If, with Mr Brown, we seek to remove Treasury decision-making from those who are "subject to all kinds of pressures," why limit our reforms to the Treasury?

Why do Messrs Brown and Lamont think interest-rate policy should not be entrusted to an elected politician? Because (they would say) this is an area of government in which popularity may be sought at the expense of long-term economic damage. Within a year or so of a general election, a Chancellor is under pressure to keep down interest rates (and thus mortgage rates), even if this risks building up inflationary pressure, the effects of which will not be felt until after the election. In other words, it is said, a Chancellor currying favour with the electorate may opt for short-term gain but long-term pain.

This is true, but only up to a point. The ill-effects of a cowardly interest-rate policy are not only predictable and predictable, but quite swift in coming. The cowardly seeker of popular favour may hear the cheers begin to die faster than he planned. A brave, "unpopular" Chancellor may win popular credit faster than cynics suppose.

Not so a brave transport minister. If the case for taking interest-rate policy away from the politicians is strong, how much stronger is the case for taking away transport policy, and handing it to the professionals. Observe the Humber Bridge, the white elephant that won a by-election, and weep! Plot the course of the Central Wales railway line, a subsidy-guzzler serving five marginal seats, and despair! All the popular pressure on a transport minister is for the quick-fix

bypass, the hopeless rail-link, the subsidy on ticket prices or, the showcase project, in preference to balanced investment in infrastructure. Few politicians dare contemplate road-pricing, and none dare extrapolate the growth of car use to 2010, let alone 2020, and ask the howling, unanswered question. A brave Chancellor may be rewarded within years. A brave transport minister will be transported vertically before he finds his reward. Transport policy should therefore be left to people who are not running for office. If a committee of the Bank of England can decide our mortgage rates, why can't a transport commission ponder guidelines for the future and carve up the current financial cake?

I am not aware that Kenneth Clarke's interest-rate policy was seriously subverted by a desire for votes. But Michael Howard's penal policy was. If you seek an example of the degrading of debate and decision-making in the scramble for popularity, Michael Howard and Jack Straw provide it. The price will be paid as the century closes and prices burst. The price was machismo for Mr Straw and — who knows? — the leadership of the Tory party for Mr Howard. If an elected Chancellor should stand at one remove from interest rates, should not the hand of an elected Home Secretary be stayed by an independent watchdog guarding the law against capricious change?

And why not revive the Board of Trade? If one of the City's fears — now dispelled — was of a Labour Chancellor's interest-rate policy, another is of Labour ministers' reaction to failing manufacturing industry: the instinct to prop it up. Were Margaret Beckett to renounce the power to "rescue" steel mills, shipyards, cotton mills, Halewoods and sundry British manufacturers facing Japanese buy-outs, the City would be reassured.

We would all be reassured if the incipient appetite of "old" Labour local government were similarly curbed. How about a national housing commission, independent of ministers, to take overall command of public-sector housing? Politicians answerable to voters' love to promise homes and freeze rents. One of the most reckless and damaging promises of all time — the Tory promise before the 1951 election to build 300,000 new houses a year — left a legacy of social division and environmental wreckage in the form of sprawling estates on green land around towns, and meanly constructed ghettos half a mile outside rural villages. It was the Tory answer to Herbert Morrison's successful drive to "build the Tories out of London". It was crazy that politicians had such powers. If a Chancellor is to be stripped of his power to court favour with mortgage-payers, why should a local councillor or environment minister, running for office, retain power to squander reserves and win favour with tenants?

Among the greatest glories of British administration are its unelected quangos. The BBC is the finest broadcasting corporation in the world. Our ancient universities spend public funds with distinction, as do the Royal Opera, the British Museum, Kew Gardens and a thousand smaller quasi-autonomous governmental or part-charitable institutions. Our Armed Forces benefit from an arm's-length relationship with elected politicians, as do English Heritage, the Arts Council and many other bodies who act in the public interest but for whose operational decisions no minister is responsible to Parliament. In recent memory, our development corporations — such as London Docklands — have had a fine record. And now, famously, our Bank of England now adds another autonomous arrow to its quiver.

Soon, in a reformed House of Lords, we are to have the mother of all quangos, an appointed but autonomous legislature, answerable to nobody and nothing but its own sense of public service. Ideology is dying, and so is the need to infuse every level of administration with the spirit of elective politics. By all means let us, from time to time, ask one captain to quit the bridge and replace him with another, but let us leave the radar controls, the engine-room, the compasses and the galley to the professionals. Hats off to Gordon Brown. Democracy is on the wane. Hurrah!

Matthew Parris

Philip Howard



That African Queen is causing trouble again

1. Lo, the Queen of Sheba hath come amongst us Mediaites again: and got her name once more into the tabloids of stone.

2. Verily the Yemenites and the tribes of Abyssinia are sorely troubled. They rage together, and their press officers imagine a vain thing. For the twain of them avow that the Queen of the South is the grandmother of their races, the Yemenites of theirs, and the Ethiopians of theirs: and they wax exceeding wroth that the other race should covet the graven image of their Holiday Ions and other tourist amenities.

3. Yea their wrath is like unto the wrath of the cockatrice that seeth its young devoured by the turtle in the noonday sun.

4. Now Balkis (or Bilkis in the Koran) was the original Spice Girl: yea, even an hundred generations before the Lady Thatcher of Kesteven took on that fluttering title.

5. For Bilkis (or Balkis) came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem with a very great company: and camels that bore spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones.

6. And when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the King, which he told her not. And his hardest question ever since has proved to be: who exactly was the Queen of Sheba?

7. For Hollywood saith that she was Ginx, Lolobridgia: dancing before a rather subdued Yul Brynner with the voluptuous wiles of Salome or the serpent in the garden eastward of Eden.

8. Some wise men say that she came from Sab in Arabia: though the trade routes did not make that barren land rich enough: for the great queen, until the years of many generations after, Solomon had slept with his fathers.

9. But Hille Selassie, the Lion of Judah, said that the Queen whom the Ethiopians call Makeda or Melkarth was the founder of his royal line.

10. And that ruieth the other judgment of Solomon: did Solomon really know the Queen of Sheba, or were they just good friends?

11. For the holy books of scripture are silent as the lizard and the mole in the wilderness on this matter: but generally people have assumed the worst, or to look at it another way, the best.

12. Since the Prophet Josephus, the Europeans have said that the great Queen was black but condescended in the manner of Black Athena, the strange new Ash-taroth worshipped by the Philistines.

13. Verily, from Chartres to Corbel (now in the sky), and from Tinnoc to Puro della Francosa, the Europeans have graven images of her as an African, with negro servants.

14. Moreover, they say that she had a webbed foot like unto a goose in the River Jordan: hence they call her *La Reine Pédaque*, pied d'oie or goosefoot.

15. Solomon was filled with wonder at the mystery of her feet: accordingly he laid down a floor of crystal which caused the Queen to lift her robe, for she mistook the crystal for water, even for the Red Sea which she may or may not have crossed on her journey to Jerusalem.

16. And lo, she had hairy legs and a cloven hoof: that was a dirty trick of Solomon's.

17. In his *Solomon and Balkis*, the scribe Robert Browning is in no doubt that the Queen wanted from Solomon something more lovely even than wisdom: and Yeats's poem *Solomon to Sheba* makes them lovers. *Selah*: Let us hope that he was right.

18. The timbrels and psalteries of Handel's entry of the Queen of Sheba in *Solomon* openeth every concert and many weddings. Moreover, Goldmark's bubbly *Queen of Sheba* smeth on the cusp between opera and operetta, where the two psalms and trumpets shall meet.

19. The diggers who dig for the ashes of Sheba will never find her: for whose diggett a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a potsherd from the fables of antiquity, it will return upon him.

20. For Solomon and the Queen of Sheba are better than chronicles and greater than mighty kings: they are the foundation document of the story of love between the races, which lasteth from generation unto generation.

McTeddy

AS THE remnants of the Conservative Party mull over the prospects for their Shadow Cabinet posts, a fiery contender is being tipped for the job of Scottish spokesman. Without a Scottish (or Welsh) constituency to its name, the party will have to choose a representative from south of the Border. Step forward Sir Teddy Taylor, MP for Southend, a formidable Scot and a Euro-basher to boot.



Teddy: tipped

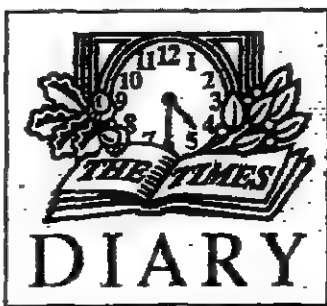
"Yes, it's true," he said yesterday. "Some people have made me an offer but, in fairness, nobody can make me an offer until there is a new leader."

Taylor has form in Scotland. From 1964 to 1979 he was MP for Glasgow Cathcart, and he was once a junior minister in the Scottish Office. When the Tories won in 1979, Margaret Thatcher wanted to make him Scottish Secretary, but he lost his seat. When he won his present seat, on the south coast, she called him Secretary of State for Southend.

Inconvenience

LAVATORIES top the agenda in the Serjeant-at-Arms' office at Westminster, where the huge influx of female MPs will place unusual demands on the facilities at the House of Commons.

Newcomers will have to hang on until the summer recess, when plumbers move in to convert a section of the Gents in each division lobby into a Ladies. Further alterations are certain. "It is a problem we are considering because the numbers are disproportionate,"



says James Robertson, the assistant Serjeant-at-Arms. "In due course, we may have an even balance of men and women."

The most radical suggestion comes from the far-left MP Judy Mallaber, who ousted Phillip Oppenheim in Derbyshire's Amber Valley. "There is a parliamentary shooting gallery and I am sure that we can get rid of that to make the space."

Top Gunn

THE RUSH among disheartened Tories to appear in print is being closely monitored by Conservative Central Office, which is battling to keep a lid on the public recriminations and exposures.

Among those under the steady gaze of the Tory apparatchiks is Sheila Gunn, a chatty press attri-

che and former Times journalist who shepherded the Majors through the campaign and became a close friend. She has indicated her intention to write a book. The journalist in her should produce something full of riveting anecdotes about John and Norma, so let's hope the Tory thought police don't cramp her style.

Punch pulled

IS the sun already setting on Mohamed Al Fayed's publishing empire, Liberty, which revived *Punch*



"That's the last time I vote Labour, Mrs Blair"

magazine only to sack its Editor Peter McKay after two months? As the circulation of his Knightsbridge pamphlet nosedives amid talk of a relaunch, I hear that Liberty's affable chairman, Stewart Steven, the former Editor of London's *Evening Standard*, is about to leave because there is nothing for him to do.

"At present I am staying where I am," insists the grandee brought in to oversee *Punch* and buy more titles on the back of its success. "I didn't think it was a lifetime's career." My guess is he'll be out by the end of the month.

Phone pole

COMMUNICATIONS technology at the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim estate is due to be updated, with the erection of an 80ft telephone mast. Locals are understandably livid.

The duke, who is negotiating with Mercury, has sensibly sited the thing a couple of miles away from his Vanburgh pile, at the village of Wootton, out of the line of sight from his windows. "It's a scandal," says the parish chairman, Ben Brook. "The transmitters are some of the ugliest structures in the countryside. To even consider putting one up at the entrance to a conservation village is monstrous."



Jennifer: detected

A frightful fuss has been made by the Post Office over publicity material dispatched by Channel 4 for Alan Bleasdale's new murder mystery, *Melissa*, starring Jennifer Ehle. Included in the package was a box of chocolates which contained a fake metal bullet. The bullets sent the PO's metal detectors and security devices haywire. "We were very concerned by the items," says the Post Office, but having investigated and rapped Channel 4 over the knuckles, it eventually agreed to deliver the boxes.

P.H.S



THE FREEDOM FILES

A Bill needs to follow the White Paper fast

Since 1974, a Freedom of Information Act has figured in Labour manifestos. When Labour won the 1974 election, the pledge was quietly filed in the pending tray and left there. Some ministers would be happy with a repeat performance. In the long campaign that has just ended, the issue was less than prominent on the hustings. Although this is one instance where legislation could easily have been prepared in advance, next week's Queen's Speech will provide only for a White Paper, with no timetable for a Bill.

The Government insists, however, that it means business this time. History teaches that if it does, it should move swiftly. The enthusiasm even of the most democratically inclined politicians for freedom of information legislation tends to wane the longer they are in office. From their first days in the job, they begin to take decisions which might later be embarrassing. The appeal of transparency becomes daily less seductive.

The case for prompt action by this Government is unusually compelling. The layers of dissimulation surrounding arms sales to Iraq unwrapped by Sir Richard Scott damaged public faith in Whitehall as well as ministers: sleaze has tainted not just those involved, but Parliament itself. In Sir Richard's words, "if government insists on secrecy for the inner workings of the government machine, it is in a position to be surprised if criticism is ill-informed".

The Prime Minister has made trust his theme: a Freedom of Information Act would help to convince voters that the new Government will keep the cupboards clean. Moreover, it is absurd that information on Britain not available here can be obtained under the US Freedom of Information Act. Putting this right would fit into a modernising political agenda.

Prompt action is made easier because the legislative task has been simplified by Tory open government reforms of Whitehall. Since 1994, civil servants have been expected to abide by a code of practice which requires them to provide, on request, quick and adequate supplies of facts and analysis, including the reasons for decisions taken.

Since last year, new rules have cleared millions of official papers for public scrutiny. The Conservative White Paper to reform Section Two of the Official Secrets Act is there to be enacted as it stands. The civil service has had time to adjust to a more open style of government.

The Bill must however be sensibly framed. Openness has to be a relative concept, not an absolute: good government may be encouraged by transparency, but is not synonymous with disclosure. Classification will still be necessary in the public interest; Mr Blair is hardly the man to dispense with Cabinet confidentiality. There are potential drawbacks to all such legislation, beginning with the disincentive to civil servants to be frank when setting out policy options. An exception to guaranteed disclosure should be advice to ministers which was rejected.

The information that most people will seek out will not, judging by other countries where freedom of information Acts are in place, concern the secret working of government departments but their personal files — tax records, social security, police records or information about their state pensions. The Government will in any case be required by a European Union directive to make much of this available: that is another reason for moving speedily ahead with a Freedom of Information Bill.

Ideally, this should be an all-party project. Tories believe in returning power from the State to the individual and that should be the Bill's primary purpose. New Labour has adopted a similar concept of "partnership" with the voters. Access to information may not guarantee democracy, but because it draws power out from the governing to the governed, it is its indispensable lubricant. To move up the legislative queue, this Bill will require, however, a forceful champion: David Clark, the head of the Office of Public Service, is unlikely to be strong enough on his own. Mr Blair has called it "a change that is absolutely fundamental to how we see politics developing in this country". Yes, Prime Minister: one for you.

FOOTSTEPS TO EMU

Some are starting to see a sinister plot

First, the Bank of England is made independent; then a passionate enthusiast for a single currency is sent to negotiate completion of the European single market; and the next day, rumours surface that the Treasury intends to put the pound back into the exchange-rate mechanism. Is Labour about to commit to the single currency?

Publicly, the position has not changed. Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, still says it is unlikely that Britain will go into EMU, at least in the first wave. The Treasury yesterday denied that it was the source of the rumour, which conveniently caused sterling to fall on international markets. And Sir David Simon, former chairman of BP, who is now Minister for European Trade and Competitiveness, is not Minister for Europe at the Foreign Office, negotiating at the intergovernmental conference.

The new Government's first few acts in office can be interpreted in two conflicting ways. The worrying interpretation is that Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, wants to prepare Britain gradually for monetary union so that when decision day arrives, the move will seem almost inevitable. This was how Nigel Lawson and Geoffrey Howe bounced Margaret Thatcher into allowing sterling to join the ERM. Mr Brown's instinct, it is to ensure that Britain's options remain genuinely open. To put about a rumour that he wanted to rejoin the ERM in the future at a rate of DM2.50 would help to weaken the overvalued pound, which is a big threat to the continuance of the recovery. If it made traders more inclined to believe that Britain would submit to European monetary discipline, so be it.

This is a dangerous game, however, if Labour has no intention of fulfilling market expectations. As Anatole Kaletsky argues on page 29, an independent Bank of England is likely to increase the upward pressure on the

pound. Traders want to buy sterling because it offers high interest rates in a country with a healthy economy and with a monetary policy given credibility by its new-found independence from political pressure. The more the pound strengthens, the more tempted Mr Brown may be to insulate himself from currency problems by subsuming sterling into EMU.

Before Eurosceptics panic, however, they should consider the opposite interpretation. Perhaps all this melodious European mood music is being played in order to soften the irritation of Britain's European partners if the country decides to stay out of EMU. Maybe the Bank has been made independent both as a sign of good will, to show that the option is being taken seriously, and as an added discipline for sterling should the single currency go ahead without Britain.

This is not inconceivable. Opinion at the top of the Labour Party has been moving against the single currency for the past couple of years. Mr Cook is very sceptical, and Mr Blair's early enthusiasm has been tempered by consideration of the economic arguments against it. Even Mr Brown has said nothing particularly positive about EMU of late. Any pragmatic government would surely want to see the single currency up and running successfully for a few years before exercising an option to join.

Which of the two interpretations is correct will not become clear for some time. Even if Labour does not intend to join EMU, ministers will not rule it out. By the autumn, it will be time to say whether Britain will join the first wave. Staying out then will not preclude later membership. The best defence against that is forcefully expressed views from the business community and the public. Mr Blair is nothing if not political: he is unlikely to fight a referendum battle that he cannot win.

THE GAME'S AFOOT

New rules for the power players of central Asia

In about 12 years time the markets of Asia will demand an estimated 11 million barrels of oil a day. At the heart of the continent lies the world's last big landlocked oil reserve that has yet to be properly exploited. Beneath the desert and the steppe lie billions of barrels of oil, enough to satisfy the growing industries of India, China and Pakistan. The difficulty is getting the oil to the market. At present, the only pipelines lead north to the Soviet Union. The former southern Soviet republics want economic independence and, to Russian consternation, have enlisted Western oil companies in the race to build new pipelines across turbulent tribal battlefields. A new Great Game is afoot.

The sums involved are as massive as the proposed pipelines. The most ambitious would take gas and oil almost 5,000 miles east to the Chinese coast, at a cost of \$12 billion. It would drive under the Sea of Japan to surface again in the heartland of Japanese industry at a further cost of \$10 billion. This joint American-Chinese-Japanese project is still a dream. The more immediate proposals are to transport the energy south to

the Arabian Sea ports. But not only must the pipelines cross the Hindu Kush; they must overcome political obstacles almost as precipitous. With Washington's new sanctions against Iran already in place, no American company will agree to the quickest and easiest route, across Iran. That leaves only Afghanistan. The Taliban have seen their chance.

For all their suspicion of Western influence, the Islamic extremists now controlling Kabul are quietly meeting oil emissaries behind high walls. Despite Western revulsion at their policies, the Americans, along with Pakistan, are giving tacit support to Kabul in the hope of valuable concessions. Political intrigue and strategic calculation is as intense as anything seen a century ago.

This time the Central Asian countries themselves are the prize. With undeveloped markets, massive reserves and a pressing need for investment, the heart of Asia wants urgent Western help. Moscow is playing a desperate game to sabotage attempts to re-establish old patterns of trade. The New Game is being played with little regard for the old rules.

Choice of leader for the Tories

From Mr Geoffrey Gelberg

Sir, As deputy chairman of my local Conservative association, I am concerned at the possibility of the next Tory leader being elected by a post-"meltdown" handful of a mere 164 MPs. These are the survivors of those who got it so wrong in 1990 and the odds are that because of the vociferous and out-of-touch Eurosceptics in their ranks they will get it wrong this time too.

In my view the only way forward is to give each of the 600-odd Tory associations the same vote as each of the successful MPs. With some 800 votes being cast, the winner would for the first time be entitled to claim the support of the Conservative grass roots.

Then, if we err, we shall owe ourselves to blame and not just the elected rump.

Yours truly,
GEOFFREY GELBERG,
37 Haslemere Avenue, NW4,
May 8.

From the Chairman of the
Scottish Conservative Candidates'
Association and others

Sir, The task of the next leader of the Conservative Party will be to oversee the rebuilding of the party throughout Great Britain. As Scottish Conservatives we believe this process must be radical and comprehensive.

In the 30 years since the war the Conservative Party in Scotland has declined from a position where it held a majority of the parliamentary seats to one where it holds no seats at all. The symptoms of this decline are apparent in the party in England; an outdated organisation, an ageing membership, and pitifully small representation in local government. We need to act now to prevent a total collapse.

One of the problems inherent in having no representation at Westminster is that we have no say in the leadership election. Were we in Parliament we would vote for William Hague. He has the vitality, energy and intellectual ability to rebuild our party and lead us back to government. Equally important, he has recognised the need to rebuild the party across Britain. We trust that our colleagues in the south will take note.

Yours faithfully,
STUART STEVENSON,
Chairman,
ADAM BRUCE
(Vice-Chairman),
ALISTER JACK
(Treasurer),
Scottish Conservative
Candidates' Association,
c/o West Flat,
Gilston, Leven, Fife,
May 7.

From Professor Emeritus
Edward Gorden

Sir, After its defeat in 1979, the Labour Party bled to the left and became unelectable. The same fate awaits the Tory party if, after the catastrophe of May 1, it veers to the right. This should be borne in mind by the MPs who will elect a new Tory leader, comparatively few as they are in number.

Yours faithfully,
EDWARD GORDEN,
Balchragan Farm House,
Kirkhill, Inverness,
May 8.

From Mr Rupert Symons

Sir, The position in which the Conservative Party now finds itself is very different to that of the Labour Party after the 1979 election.

The Labour Party needed to rethink and refashion its whole political philosophy. Many argue that new Labour has only now become electable because of its espousal of the Thatcherite status quo.

The Conservative Party does not now need to be "reborn" in policy terms — new Conservatism is not required. Instead, the party needs to be seen as having a renewed appetite for government and a revitalised ability to govern effectively. That means the people at the top have to change. There is no point in trying to present the old faces to the electorate in five years' time and pretending that they have somehow become different people.

I firmly believe that William Hague is the only possible candidate who could form an effective Opposition and take the party through the next five years successfully.

Yours faithfully,
R. SYMONS,
15 Bishopswood Road, N6,
May 6.

From Daljit Sehbi

Sir, With six leaders standing to replace John Major and an electorate of only 164 MPs, we have a classic example of too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

Yours faithfully,
D. SEHBI,
Reform Club,
Pall Mall, SW1,
May 8.

Business letters, page 29
Sport letters, page 41

Letters for publication should carry contact telephone numbers. We regret that we cannot accept letters by telephone but they may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5000.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E2 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Independence for Bank of England

From Mr Walter Grey

Sir, Anatole Kaletsky ("A steel cage for the iron Chancellor", May 7) draws a quite inappropriate analogy between Gordon Brown's "sudden" announcement of operational independence for the Bank of England on the one hand, and John Major's "equally unexpected and 'irreversible' decision to join the exchange-rate mechanism" on the other.

First, there was nothing wrong with joining the ERM as such. What was wrong, briefly, is that we did so too late, and therefore at an unsustainably high rate, and then, right up to the eve of Black Wednesday, stubbornly opposed a general ERM realignment, repeatedly offered in the wake of German reunification, under which sterling's overvaluation could have been corrected quite painlessly.

Indeed, far from continuing to blame what went wrong on the ERM (which is, of course, still going as strong as ever, if not stronger, without us) rather than on ourselves, we should now, given the ERM's widerened fluctuation bands and, above all, our own reformed monetary regime (and already improved economic performance), consider rejoining the ERM sooner rather than later.

Second, and most important, what Kaletsky censures as now being the Bank's — like the German Bundesbank's — "virtually exclusive preoccupation with prices" is, in fact, a positive virtue. Besides working, as it must, against inflation and deflation alike, price stability is a prime prerequisite of sustained growth free from the ravages of the boom-bust ("economic") cycle, and of other, hitherto denied or elusive, social as well as economic benefits.

Yours faithfully,
WALTER GREY,
12 Arden Road, Finchley, N3,
May 7.

From Lord Catto

Sir, My father, who was the last Governor of the publicly owned Bank of England and the first Governor of the nationalised Bank, made every effort, in the framing of the Act of Parliament, to ensure that the new Bank had as much independence from the Treasury as possible. To this end his insistence that the appointment of the governor should be for a fixed term has had the result, over the past half century, that governors have not been changed when a new administration

has been voted into power by the people.

He was also concerned that friction between the City and Whitehall should be kept to a minimum. After all, he had himself been sitting, with Maynard Keynes, as one of the two advisers to the wartime Chancellors of the Exchequer. Unfortunately the proposal that control of bank rate would continue to be exercised by the Bank of England in consultation with the Treasury gradually faded away; this was publicly acknowledged by Denis Healey in a Budget speech announcing a change in base rate.

Much of this country's problems with inflation over the postwar period, which hurt the poor and the pensioners most, stem from the lack of confidence not only by us but by the world at large in the ability of any British government to control it. The recent Government under Mr Major had already made good progress but the new Labour Government's action announced yesterday will reinforce this.

I am sure that my father would have welcomed the proposal that the right place for the control of interest rates is in an independent central bank.

Yours faithfully,
CATTO
(President),
Deutsche Morgan Grenfell
Group plc,
23 Great Winchester Street, EC2,
May 7.

From Mr Edwin Lee

Sir, It is reassuring to know that after successful supervision of the likes of Johnson Matthey, BCCI and Barings the Bank of England is now to be put in charge of the nation's interest-rate policy.

Yours faithfully,
EDWIN LEE,
Rowde House, Rowde, Wiltshire,
May 7.

From Mr Peter C. Kne

Sir, Now that the Bank of England is effectively to gain its independence, is it not also time that it was renamed Bank of Britain? A Scottish Chancellor should relish such an overdue move.

Yours sincerely,
P. C. KNE,
46 Burkes Road,
Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire,
May 7.

Major's admiration for Rab Butler

From Mr D. R. Thorpe

Sir, Recrimination is an inevitable aftermath of electoral defeat. As Arthur Balfour ruefully observed: "It is not a principle of the Conservative Party to stab its leaders in the back, but I must confess that it often appears to be a practice." However, for Tim Harries ("How the campaign was lost", May 2) to criticise John Major for his admiration of the pragmatism of Rab Butler, on the grounds that "if Butler's advice had been accepted in 1940, Britain would have ceded Europe to Nazi Germany", is not sustainable as a serious historical comment.

Rab Butler's discussion, when Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, of possible peace terms during an informal meeting with the Swedish Ambassador, Björn Prytz, in St James's Park on June 17, 1940, can hardly be deemed "advice".

Foreign policy would be determined by the Secretary of State, Lord Halifax, as Prytz's telegram to his Government that night acknowledged. Although Butler later conceded that even discussing the possibility of negotiations might be interpreted as defeatism, especially on the day of the fall of France, the episode was really an example, as the late Lord Colyton stressed, of Butler's deliberate use of

"revealing and injudicious comments in order to extract responses from his listeners".

John Major's admiration for Rab Butler on both the personal and political level is well founded. The dignified manner of his own departure from Downing Street, publicly acknowledged by the incoming Prime Minister, is a direct parallel with the way in which Butler responded to his great disappointment in October 1963; and his determination that the Conservative Party should seek to rebuild at the earliest opportunity mirrors Rab Butler's belief that the 1945 landslide defeat should be for the Conservatives "a healthy opportunity and compelling motive for bringing both their policies and characteristic modes of expression up to date".

As Butler's restructuring of Conservative philosophy in the years of opposition paved the way for an early return to office in 1951, present-day post mortems should not begin by vicariously obliquely aimed at the principal architect of postwar Conservative revival.

Yours faithfully,
D. R. THORPE,
Brooke Hall,
Charterhouse, Godalming, Surrey,
May 6.

Pink peril

From Lieutenant-Commander
Philip Barber, RN (ret)

Sir, Surely Leander succumbed to a "monstrous fleet" unless the "regiment" walks on water (Ms Katharine Sinderon's letter, May 2; see also letter, May 3); in which case the MCC, the male bastion targeted by Ms Sinderon, may indeed have much to fear.

Yours aye,
PHILIP BARBER,
Longpudde House,
Nob Hill, Norton Juxta Twycross,
Atherstone, Warwickshire,
May 5.

Nesting habits

From Mr M. J. Clarke

Sir, Mr Phil Ridgway's house martins (letter, April 25; see also letters, May 3 and 5) may not be particularly unusual in working as a threesome at nestbuilding. However, I was surprised to read that they were building in his stables. I thought house martins always nested on the outside of a building, usually under the eaves, leaving the interior to the swallows.

Could this be an attempt to avoid publicity?

Yours sincerely,
M. J. CLARKE,
20 Whitthaven Gardens,
Manchester 20,
May 4.

Delays in policing the law's failings

From Mr H. P. K. Bradley

Sir, I would be interested to know how other, with complaints against solicitors deal with the frustration of working with the Law Society's policing body, the Office of the Supervision of Solicitors, based in Leamington Spa. My own quite straightforward complaint was notified to the OSS in early September last year. As far as I can see, they are no nearer resolving the situation than they were then.

The officer handling my case tells me she has 300 other cases and mine must take its course. A letter in support of my complaint, faxed to Leamington on April 4, had not even been read by the officer on May 1 when I phoned her, although "it will receive priority when it comes to the top of the pile".

Is the idea that Joe Public will become so disenchanted that they drop the charges?

Yours faithfully,
H. P. K. BRADLEY,
108 Upper Richmond Road West,
East Sheen, SW14,
May 6.

Roy Strong's diaries

From Mr John Goodwin

Sir, During the end of the very period, 1967 to 1987, when Sir Roy Strong was keeping his extravagantly indiscreet diaries (extracts, May 5-8), he wrote an enjoyable article in *The Times* on diaries in general. This was on February 4, 1984, when he showed a strong preference for those that cover "visions of aesthetic loveliness and delight" and those from an earlier age, while disapproving somewhat of those, like Sir Peter Hall's, that deal candidly with living personalities and contemporary events.

I don't at all blame Sir Roy for side-stepping the views he then expressed publicly. The most readable diaries are often recklessly frank. But here, surely, is an illuminating — even heartening — example of how splendidly flexible the human mind can be.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN GOODWIN
(Editor, *Peter Hall's Diaries*,
Hamish Hamilton, 1983),
52a Digby Mansions,
Lower Mall, W6,
May 8.

Changing archaeology

From Dr Martin Welch

Sir, Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, the Chief Archaeologist at English Heritage, seems to imply in his letter (April 25; see also letters April 23 and May 5) that quantity of excavation is more important than its quality. Many academic archaeologists are, however, unconvinced that the plethora of low-grade evaluation excavations does provide the "rich research potential" he claims.

Professor Wainwright extols the merits of "protection" rather than excavation, but the fact that English Heritage is funding research into the long-term effects of protection schemes highlights how little is really known about them. They are in effect carrying out an experiment on much of our archaeological heritage which may or may not prove successful.

At a public inquiry into such a scheme for a very important Anglo-Saxon cemetery site in Croydon, English Heritage persisted in pushing its "protection" scheme, involving resurfacing the site under a car park, even though expert opinion was clear that human remains and grave goods were likely to deteriorate as a result.

Virtually every expert in the field of early Anglo-Saxon archaeology, including a representative of the British Museum, agreed that there was a good research case for the fullest possible excavation of this site. The developer's costs would not have exceeded what was required for partial excavation under the English Heritage scheme. Croydon's elected councillors saw the merits of the research case, but English Heritage did not.

Archaeology in England is indeed "in the doldrums" and both academic and contract archaeologists are increasingly frustrated by the dead hand of this quango.

Yours faithfully,
MARTIN WELCH,
University College London,
Institute of Archaeology,
31-34 Gordon Square, WC1,
May 5.

Ministerial help

From Mr David Mitchell

Sir, I find Dr Norman Dyson's solution to the drought (letter, May 7) — instituting more bank holidays — unduly expensive and quite unnecessary.

Surely there is a good precedent for a swift cure. In the great drought of 1976 the then Labour Government appointed a minister for the drought — a chap called Denis Howell. This was the most effective ministerial appointment ever made. Within two weeks the rains came — and stayed.

This could be a tremendous opportunity for the new Government to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MITCHELL,
7 Cedar Heights,
Richmond, Surrey,
May 7.

GENERAL SIR JOHN GIBBON

SIR MICHAEL SHERSBY

He never struggled for office, however, but served unostentatiously on bodies such as the Chairmen's Panel and the Public Accounts Committee. He was chairman of the Police Parliamentary Group, of the all-party British Falklands Islands Group and an executive member of the UK Commonwealth Group. He was knighted in 1995.

Michael Shersby married in 1958 Barbara Barrow, who had her own career as a pharmacist. She survives him with their son and daughter.

WIJAYANANDA DAHANAYAKE

SIR ALAN RICHMOND

He leaves a widow, Sally, whom he married in 1951, and a stepdaughter and a stepson.

PERSONAL COLUMN

[illegible]

LIEUT.-COL. KENWORTHY (Hull Central Lab.) asked the Home Secretary whether his attention had been called to the manifesto drawn up by Prince Carol of Rumania, now in this country, and printed in London, calling upon the people of Rumania to oust King Michael and recall Prince Carol to the throne; and whether he did not consider that action a

SIR W. JOYNSON-HICKS, Home Secretary (Twickenham).—The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. After consultation with my right hon friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I have caused Prince Carol to be informed that his presence in this country is no longer welcome and that he should terminate his visit without delay.

MR. E. BROWN (Leith, L.) asked whether Prince Carol was granted a permit to reside in Scotland.

MISS WILKINSON (Middlesbrough E., Lab.) asked whether the Home Secretary treated Royalty differently in this matter of propaganda from ordinary citizens.

SIR W. JOYNSON-HICKS.—It is quite obvious from the action I have taken that I make no distinction.

NEWS

Blair demands all-out action

Tony Blair cast aside tradition and formality and demanded discipline and hard work as the first Labour Cabinet meeting for 18 years approved an all-action programme of 22 Bills to become law in a marathon parliamentary session.

The measures, including education bills to drive up standards, an attack on crime and a shake-up of the health service, as well as the plan to establish a Scottish parliament, were given the go ahead at a two-hour gathering. Page 1

Women dancers get the blues

Women ballroom dancers from Oxford University will be eligible for a full blue when they quickstep on to the floor in the annual Varsity match against Cambridge tomorrow. The women's blues committee at Oxford has decided to upgrade the sport from half-blue to full-blue status. Page 1

BCCI man jailed

Abbas Gokal, 61, was jailed for 14 years for his role in sinking the Bank of Credit and Commerce in what is believed to be the world's biggest fraud. Page 1

Burglar wins

A burglar has successfully sued a farmer who broke his jaw with a kick after he caught him stealing roof slates. Stanley Wiles, 63, must pay damages to Malcolm Phillips, 37. Page 3

Police guard school

Police were drafted onto the streets of west London after parents threatened revenge against five schoolboys accused of raping a nine-year-old girl. Page 5

Dogs quietened

Four dogs whose barking drove neighbours wild are living a quiet life after therapy sessions with an animal "psychiatrist". Magistrates threatened to remove the animals after Mark Bambrugh protested. Page 6

Secret triplets

The parents of surrogate triplets said that they had had to keep their "blessings from God" a secret in the tense months leading up to their birth. Page 7

Rich students only

The medical profession is in danger of again becoming a preserve of the rich, according to the students' committee of the British Medical Association. Page 8

Blue Peter bans child sweeps

Blue Peter, was accused of "political correctness gone mad" after refusing to film children dressed as chimney sweeps because they had blackened faces. BBC producers had planned a feature on a Dickensian festival, organised by the Rochester and Medway Council, but decided that the spectacle of children covered with soot might cause racial offence. Page 1

HRT research

One million women are being asked to take part in a study of hormone replacement therapy. The project plans to answer questions about links with breast cancer and heart disease. Page 9

Bacon film in doubt

A film being made about the artist Francis Bacon, starring Derek Jacobi, may be halted by administrators of his estate. Page 13

Yeltsin warns Nato

President Yeltsin issued a warning that Nato's plans to expand eastwards had provoked the most serious dispute between Russia and the United States since the 1962 Cuban crisis. Page 14

New Zaire crisis

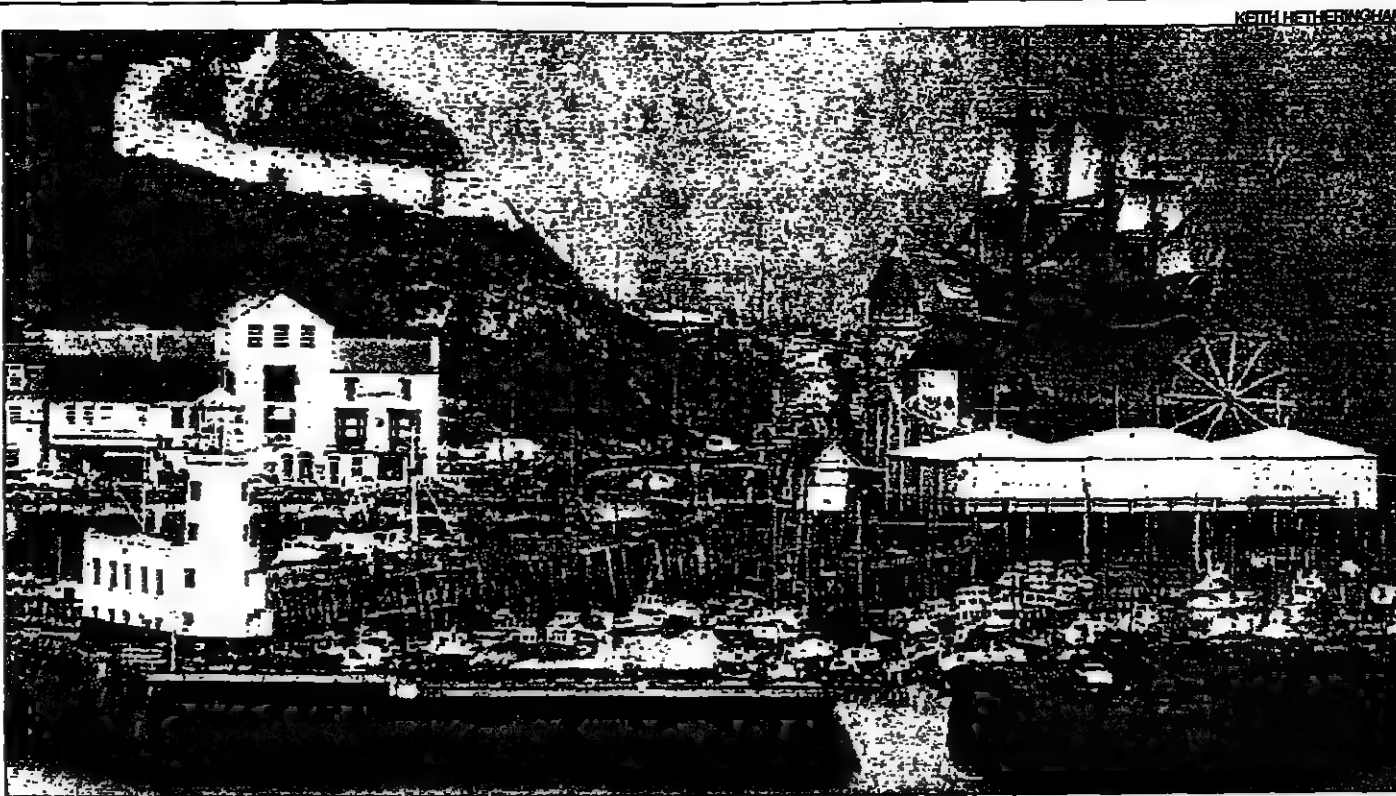
Several divisions of Angolan government troops, supported by helicopters and tanks, were massed along the Zaire border close to Matadi, the port which is Kinshasa's lifeline. Page 15

Oil prospectors

International oil companies are renting an office in the impoverished Afghanistan city of Kandahar, headquarters of the Taliban Islamic militia, seeking a stake in prospects to the north. Page 16

Caribbean crime

The Caribbean islands are battling a crime wave, and an increase in the deportation of criminals from the United States is largely to blame. Page 17



A replica of HMS Endeavour, the flagship of Captain Cook, at his home port of Whitby during a circumnavigation of the globe

BUSINESS

Private finance: The Government moved to streamline the workings of the Private Finance Initiative, removing a key obstacle to having billions of pounds of privately-funded public sector projects approved speedily. Page 25

Warning: Shares in BTR fell by 36p to 231p after the engineering conglomerate produced its second profit warning in a year. Page 25

Neel Edmonds: Toad, the car security company, has joined forces with the TV presenter in a deal that offers him a shareholding potentially worth £2.4 million. Page 25

Markets: The FT-SE 100 rose 42.9 to 4800.4. Sterling fell from 100.3 to 98.8 after falls from \$1.6358 to \$1.6205 and from DM2.8126 to DM2.7678. Page 28

SPORT

Football: Stuart Pearce, the England and Nottingham Forest defender, is to relinquish his role as caretaker manager and will be replaced by Dave Bassett, the general manager. Page 48

Crickets: The new chairman of selectors, David Graveney, has not seen a ball bowled this week despite clocking up hundreds of motorway miles. Page 44

Motor racing: After the first, unofficial practice for the Monaco Grand Prix an Englishman, Johnny Herbert, was fastest of the 22 entrants in his Sauber. Page 40

Fishing: The British record committee has refused to accept a 90lb catfish as a record for the species unless proof can be provided that it was legally stocked. Page 48

ARTS

Bloody revenge: The RSC in Stratford unveils a new production of *The Spanish Tragedy* that does not quite rise to the bloodthirsty mood of Kyd's 16th-century revenge drama. Page 33

Pop albums: The Big Bang spirit of Nirvana lives on in the new Foo Fighters' album, while Robert Cray offers more of his well-organised blues. Page 34

Remix mania: Madonna, Michael Jackson, Suzanne Vega and Tori Amos are all doing it — dancing to the computer's tune. Page 35

New releases: Anthony Hopkins is the artist at the centre of *Surviving Picasso*, now released on video; Maria Callas is in fine voice on a CD inspired by the West End play, *Master Class*. Page 36

FEATURES

New dawn: "We are most grateful for what the last government did, but it's the beginning of the story, not the end," Frank Field, the minister charged with welfare reform, meets Valerie Grove. Page 18

Centre stage: After years in the doldrums, Russia's once-legendary Bolshoi Theatre is determined to return to the centre of the world scene. Page 19

Write stuff: Joseph Connolly spills the beans on what happened at the most stylish literary bash of all, the Authors of the Year party. Page 19

EDUCATION

In the post: Every school in England will soon receive a letter from the new Secretary of State: a sneak preview. Page 39

Unsettled: Is it fair that go-ahead academics who have won advancement, are the ones whose jobs are now at risk? A lecturer wonders why he may lose life tenure. Page 39

THE PAPERS

Gary Kasparov observed after his defeat by a computer that the machine seemed able to think for itself. But intelligence does not only consist of calculation: it also embraces memory, sensibility, intuition, and the ability to ask the right questions as well as find the right answers. The world's woes do not stem from machines, but from the people who make them. — *Il Messaggero*, Rome

TOMORROW

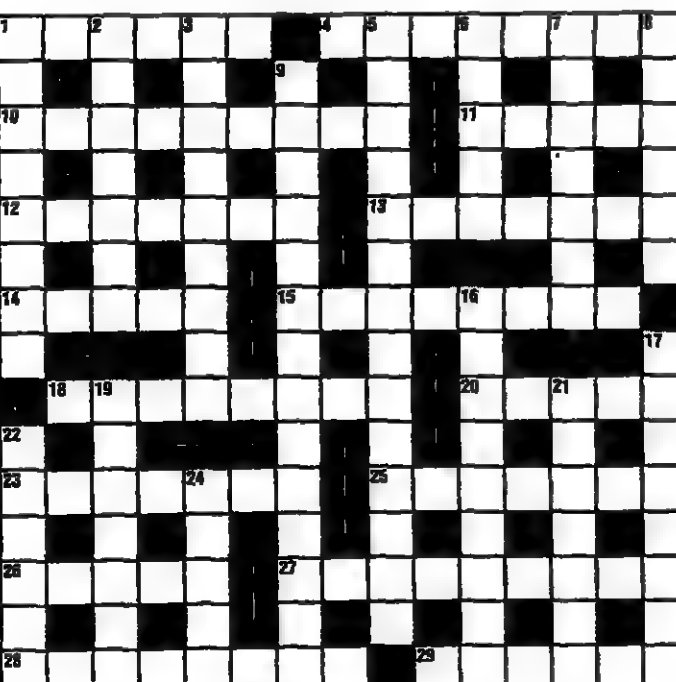
IN THE TIMES

MAGAZINE
Sean Bean, British movie heart-throb, on his role as Count Vronsky in *Anna Karenina*

CAR 97
Britain's new mecca for Harley Davidson enthusiasts



THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,475



ACROSS

- 1 Wet swan seen on reservoir (6).
- 4 Tissue that can make nose uncomfortable (8).
- 10 Recognise movement in mass (9).
- 11 In more ways than one, they may make a fine spray (5).
- 12 Quiet part of Spain is ideal (7).
- 13 Cardinal, say, about to contribute to the collection (7).
- 14 Make exultant, finalising previous answer (5).
- 15 Fast road into airport — on the way in boisterous fashion (5).
- 18 Start to grow a popular fruit (8).
- 20 Half-heartedly try to influence peer (5).
- 23 A new attempt by artists to show various animals (7).
- 25 Gangster to be fearful of? So am I (7).
- 26 Sudden raid to bring back prisoners netting nothing (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,474

PIQUE FLOORSHOW
U X A S O I H
FOOTPRINT CALVE
F T R K K E
AWAKE WHISICAL
O S A C L
DEBUSSY HOULIN
E T L R M N
REVEALED VISIBLE
I E I A B
VINGETON MAJOR
I G W R E I O I
SAUNA ORGANIZINE
T A N T A O N T
ALLIGATOR RITZY

- 27 Cried by turns, feeling loss of parting perhaps (9).
- 28 Feasts damn easy to organise (4).
- 29 Admiration produced by puzzle (6).

DOWN

- 1 Sort out import price he'd fiddled (8).
- 2 Island bird grabbing some worm in, or caterpillar (7).
- 3 Lights so ideal for tree? (9).
- 5 Girl's date is a flop (14).
- 6 One Pole or another East European type (5).
- 7 Get ready to work where animal's housed (7).
- 8 Tender as Ophelia was to Laertes (6).
- 9 Reason for entering huge wave that's off Irish coast (6,5).
- 16 Declaration of intent has obvious omission, lacking sense of purpose (9).
- 17 Newsman in army personnel carrier (5).
- 19 Berth set up in accommodation for members (7).
- 21 It helps one keep up one's reading (7).
- 22 Professional man beginning to panic over crime (6).
- 24 Quick attack captures pawn (5).

Times Two Crossword, page 48

AA INFORMATION

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Dial from your fax number, you may have to fax to poll records mode
AA Development Ltd.
Refill: New Roadway Refill Range: 100 ml
Calls are charged at 45p per minute plus 10p, 50p per minute at all other times.

HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Penzance, Cornwall, 14°C (57°F). Lowest day temp: Scarborough, Cumbria, 7°C (45°F). Highest rainfall: Capel Bangor, Gwynedd, 122mm. Highest sunshine: Stoneywell, Cambridgeshire, 12hrs.

FORECAST

General: Wales and central and eastern England should start bright or sunny. Other parts of England are expected to be more cloudy, perhaps with some showers. Cloud will increase everywhere and from late morning onwards showers are expected to become fairly frequent in most places. The showers may be heavy at times, with thunder here and there. Skies will clear during the late evening.

Scotland and Northern Ireland will start with sunny intervals and scattered showers, but the showers will become more frequent and heavier during the day. There will be thunder in places and some sleet and snow on hills. The best chance of sunshine will be in southern Scotland.

Temperature will generally be near the May average.
London, E Anglia, Midlands, E England, Central N England, NE England: bright or sunny start.

Showers developing. Thunder possible. Wind west moderate. Cool in the showers. Max 14C (57F).

SE England, Central S England, Channel Isles, SW England, Wales, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man: bright early but showers becoming more frequent as the day progresses. Thunder possible. Wind west moderate or fresh. Cool in the showers. Max 13C (55F).

Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, NE Scotland, Argyll, NW Scotland, Orkney, Shetland, N Ireland: bright at first. Showers becoming more frequent and widespread during the day. Thunder expected with sleet and snow on the hills. Wind easterly moderate. Cool. Max 10C (50F).

Outlook: a mixture of sunny periods and scattered showers with an occasional longer spell of rain.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

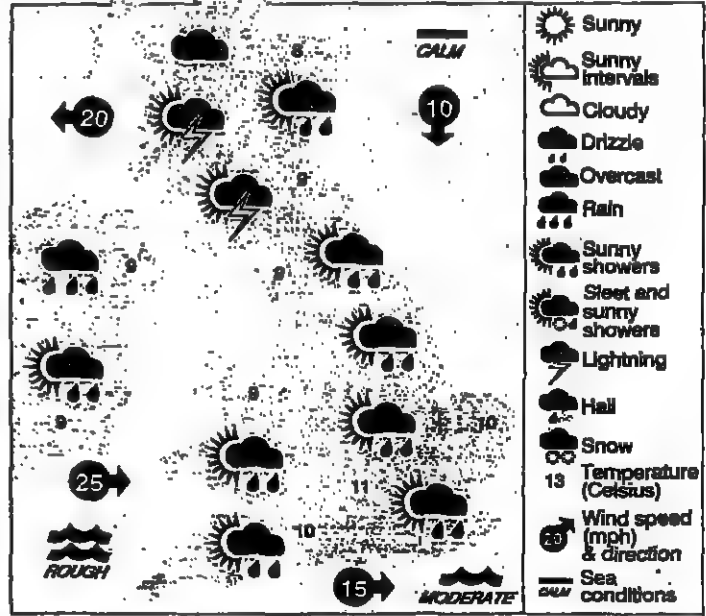
24 hrs to 5 pm: h = bright, c = clear, o = overcast, d = drizzle, sun = sun, r = rain, fog = fog, g = hail									
	Sun	Rain	C	M		Sun	Rain	C	M
Northumbria	39	008	8	46	Lancaster	87	004	8	46
Anglia	61	011	10	50	Leeds	67	025	9	46
Yorkshire	48	022	9	48	Leicester	33	029	12	54
East Anglia	7	011	10	50	London	33	023	12	54
London	32	025	11	52	Lowestoft	31	033	9	48
SE England	20	017	13	55	Manchester	59	001	13	55
Wales	23	012	12	54	Middlesbrough	49	017	14	57
Midlands	27	003	12	54	Milton Keynes	48	030	10	50
North	10	011	10	50	Nottingham	59	022	10	50
Yorkshire	63	013	13	55	Northwich	50	022	10	50
East Anglia	74	009	11	52	Oldham	49	015	13	55
London	49	010	10	50	Oldbury	36	021	14	57
SE England	03	010	9	48	Polegate	33	026	13	55
Wales	10	011	10	50	Reading	49	017	14	57
Midlands	49	016	8	46	Rhyl	65	008	12	54
North	89	033	12	54	Salisbury	48	046	13	55
Yorkshire	23	010	9	48	Scarborough	59	022	10	50
East Anglia	17	010	8	46	Salford	46	013	13	55
London	38	016	12	54	Sarnath St	46	013	13	55
SE England	14	013	13	55	Sheff Hallam	59	022	10	50
Wales	18	054	9	48	Sheff Wed	49	014	11	52
Midlands	58	005	12	54	Sherriff	49	014	11	52
North	61	011	10	50	Shrewsbury	58	014	11	52
Yorkshire	32	026	14	57	Southampton	38	017	14	57
East Anglia	90	014	13	55	Southport	38	017	14	57
London	11	021	13	55	South Shields	49	017	14	57
SE England	36	002	13	55	St Albans	49	017	14	57
Wales	83	017	12	54	St Albans	129	002	9	46
Midlands	23	004	10	50	Stamford	44	013	12	54
North	11	021	13	55	Stamford	44	013	12	54
Yorkshire	10	015	10	50	Stamford	44	013	12	54
East Anglia	52	017	8	46	Stamford	44	013	12	54
London	23	004	10	50	Stamford	44	013	12	54
SE England	11	021	13	55	Stamford	44	013	12	54
Wales	83	017	12	54	Stamford	44	013	12	54
Midlands	23	004	10	50	Stamford	44	013	12	54
North	11	021	13	55	Stamford	44	013	12	54
Yorkshire	10	015	10	50	Stamford	44	013	12	54
East Anglia	52	017	8	46	Stamford	44	013	12	54

ABROAD

Algeria	15	591	21	70	Malta	15	591	18	64
Algeria	23	72	23	73	Malta	26	79	23	73
Algeria	20	681	17	63	Malta	12	35	6	48
Algeria	7	011	10	50	Malta	27	81	20	66
Algeria	32	025	11	52	Malta	20	68	13	54
Algeria	20	017	13	55	Malta	49	017	14	57
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Algeria									

NEWSPAPERS
SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up
of 75% of the raw material for
UK newspapers in the first
half of 1997

NOON TODAY



Changes to chart below from noon: low U will remain centred over Britain and slowly fill; low J will fill as it

THE TIMES

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

FRIDAY MAY 9 1997

BTR's shares slump after second profit warning

By OLIVER AUGUST



Strachan: sterling worry

SHARES IN BTR slumped by 14 per cent yesterday after the company gave its second profit warning within a year. The price slide wiped £1.6 billion off the value of Britain's biggest conglomerate. The shares fell from 267½p to 231p, but one major holder chose to bail out at just 215½p.

Ian Strachan, chief executive, blames BTR's disappointing performance on the strong pound and weaker than expected markets in Germany and Australia. His warning prompted heavy selling of the shares.

SBC Warburg, the house broker, bought 80 million shares, 2 per cent of the total, from an unknown investor at 215p and later sold them on for 219p, making a profit of £2.8 million.

BTR said that sales in the first half of 1997 will be hit by £300 million assuming currencies stay at current levels. Operating profits are expected to suffer a £35 million decrease.

The message from the company is that it is suffering from depressed markets in Germany and Australia, which account for 30 per cent of sales, and that the problems have been exacerbated by the strength of sterling.

BTR is in the middle of a global restructuring. So far, 80 per cent of the intended disposals have been executed and the City had been convinced that the group had overcome its problems.

Last May, BTR said that it expected lower first-half operating profits because of poor performance by an Asian division, but two months ago it reported better than expected results for 1996 and said that it was making good progress on cost-cutting and restructuring.

Analysis yesterday cut 1997 profit estimates by about 10 per cent, to around £1.2 billion, but some said that the market reaction was too severe. Ian Rennardson, of Credit Lyonnais, said: "As far as the longer term is concerned, BTR is doing all the right things."

Labour aims for billions in PFI projects

By PHILIP BASSETT AND OLIVER AUGUST

THE new Labour Government yesterday moved to streamline the workings of the Private Finance Initiative, removing a key obstacle to having billions of pounds of privately funded public sector projects approved quickly.

The Treasury will immediately end the universal testing of all PFI schemes, a move which was warmly welcomed by business. This was coupled with the announcement of a private sector led review of the whole PFI process, due to be completed within six weeks.

This has the clear aim of improving the efficiency of public-private partnership on key projects. Geoffrey Robinson, Paymaster General, announced that Malcolm Bates, chairman of Pearl Assurance and Premier Parnell and a former deputy managing director at GEC, would conduct a "rapid" review of the current arrangements, taking as a starting point the 12 proposals for PFI reform included in Labour's business manifesto.

Mr Bates, an original member of the first Private Finance group, which was set up to oversee the PFI, is to report by June 13 and the Government is expected to implement any recommended changes speedily. The shake-up is likely to include setting specific time-scales for projects and reviewing current legislation along the lines of the 12-point plan in the Labour manifesto for business.

The Government said it was ending universal testing for potential private finance projects, which it said had been a "recipe for frustration and delay". Departments will now be able to avoid spending time and money trying to develop models for private finance which they know will be unworkable, although it was made clear that this did not imply any increase in departments' capital budgets.

Mr Robinson said: "We know the thing hasn't delivered. We know there are obstacles in the way. Most of them have been created by government. We need to work out what to do now." Although £7 billion worth of projects have been approved under the PFI, work has been painfully slow. The biggest impact from Labour's changes will be felt in the health sector, where there are more than 80 new tenders awaiting approval.

A Treasury spokesman said: "The main thing is health. The large district hospitals are first." The biggest projects destined for a quick sign-off are the £90 million rebuilding of the 520-bed Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon and the £170 million Norwich and Norfolk Hospital providing 700 beds, the biggest PFI venture in the NHS.

The PFI scheme was supposed to aid the funding of new hospitals. But rather than speeding up the construction, the PFI scheme brought hospital development almost to a standstill because of the complexity of the tendering process and concerns about trusts exceeding their legal powers by entering into large contracts.

Charles Cox, chairman of the CBI's public procurement committee, said: "The abolition of universal testing is a major policy leap for PFI — picking up the CBI's recommendation for a more focused approach to project selection." Taylor Woodrow, the builder, welcomed the changes. A spokesman said: "We have had problems, particularly in the health sector, not so much in road building. At the moment, we are the preferred bidder on five hospitals. All have taken a long time because PFI projects in this area have had a very long learning curve."

Pound dives over ERM speculation

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

THE POUND nosedived on the foreign exchanges yesterday after speculation that the Government wants to rejoin the European exchange-rate mechanism at DM2.50.

The pound tumbled 4.5 pence to close at DM2.3678, while sterling's trade-weighted index fell to 98.8 from 100.3. The pound also finished 1.5 cents lower against the dollar at \$1.6205. In contrast, the FTSE 100 soared 42.9 points to a closing record of 4,580.4, tracking the recovery on Wall Street after its 140-point fall on Wednesday.

The fall in the pound came after a report overnight suggested that Labour would consider re-entering the ERM at DM2.50. But Treasury officials quickly moved to deny the story which was attributed to an unnamed source. Most analysts say it is unlikely Labour intends to re-enter the ERM at this stage because it goes against policy. But there is a suspicion that the Government may want to talk sterling lower.

The pound is expected to derive some short-term support from the expectation of further rate rises after the latest CBI distributive trades survey suggested that high street spending had accelerated again during April. Sir Brian Mottat, chairman of British Steel, yesterday weighed in on the growing debate over the pound warning that its current level affects 8.5 million jobs in the manufacturing sector. He claimed that the attempt to control inflation through interest rates was having an exaggerated impact on manufacturing competitiveness where few inflationary pressures existed.

Pennington, page 27

BCCI fraud reaps Gokal record 14 years in jail

By JON ASHWORTH

THE Pakistani shipping tycoon who crippled the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was yesterday sent to prison for 14 years, in the steepest sentence of its kind to be meted out by a British court.

Abbas Gokal, 61, former chairman of the Gulf Group, siphoned \$1.2 billion (£750 million) from BCCI through a maze of offshore companies, threatening ruin for thousands of bank depositors, including the Western Isles council in Scotland. He passes into history as Britain's biggest fraudster, his case one of vast complexity.

Sentencing Gokal at the Old Bailey, Mr Justice Buxton said that his actions had threatened the integrity of the entire international banking system. Gokal had lied repeatedly during the trial, showed no remorse, and had cost the English taxpayer many millions of pounds. He was ordered to pay £2.9 million out of his personal assets within two years, or face an additional three years in prison.

However, no compensation order was awarded in favour of BCCI creditors, who received a first dividend of 24.5p in the pound last December, and can anticipate a second distribution of at least 10p in the pound. The liquidators of BCCI are pursuing civil litigation aimed at recovering up to \$10 billion. They hope to learn this month whether they will be allowed to proceed with a claim against the Bank of England, which closed BCCI down in 1991.

Christopher Morris, the joint liquidator of BCCI, said: "We will continue civil proceedings against Gokal and his associates worldwide." Gokal was convicted last month of fraud and false accounting, at the conclusion of a 122-day trial that cost £4.5 million. His sentence far outstrips the previous record of ten years imposed on Peter Clowes, whose Barlow Clowes financial empire collapsed in 1985, at great cost to thousands of elderly investors. In 1995, Graham Durnford Ford, a solicitor, was jailed for ten years for stealing £8 million from the estates of deceased clients.

The Serious Fraud Office, which has successfully prosecuted in five consecutive cases linked to BCCI, said the sentence sent an emphatic message to would-be fraudsters. Gokal's wife, Rukaiyana, and daughter, Sukaiyana, watched from the gallery, as the judge told Gokal that he was "an intelligent, sophisticated and unscrupulous man, who put the interests of yourself and your family before all else."

Stagecoach escapes with £900,000 fine

By FRASER NELSON



STAGECOACH, the transport group that cancelled 2000 trains on its South West Trains rail franchise this winter after making too many drivers redundant, has paid a £900,000 fine.

The company, which receives a state subsidy of £1 million a week to run the service, has escaped the special £1 million fine threatened by Opra, the rail franchising regulator, after restoring services in April. John O'Brien, franchising director, said he had a lively discussion with John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, who was told that Opra was powerless to impose further penalties on the operator. He said: "It is to implement the law as it is laid down. I have been asked to see how enforcement powers can be changed to stop what they [Labour] see as operators getting away with it."

Gavin Stang, Minister for Transport, said operators were on their last warning. "The South West Trains episode supports our belief that the weapons currently available to the regulators are inadequate."

Stagecoach, run by Brian Souter, said it was delighted with the outcome, describing the two-month-long disruption as "a testing problem". Its shares rose 19½p to 618½p. Brian Cox, managing director of South West Trains, said: "We are now fully geared to get back on track and stay on track." The situation was never as bad as it was made out — the ship had a stormy launch but it stayed robust."

Stagecoach was able to avoid the heavier penalties by restricting cancellations to off-peak services. While Opra levies £600 for every peak-time train that is cancelled, the penalty for off-peak cancellations can fall below £100.

To take extra action under the Railway Act, Opra must wait until a train operator has underperformed for eight weeks. Then, it can threaten an unlimited fine that can be imposed only after a further month. It was in this final "grace period" that South West Trains restored its service, avoiding the extra penalty.

Pennington, page 27

Toad asks TV star to make it famous

By FRASER NELSON

TOAD, the car security company, has joined forces with Noel Edmonds in a deal that offers the television personality a shareholding potentially worth £2.4 million if he makes the company a household name within two years.

Mr Edmonds has also agreed to sell Toad his own car security company for £200,000 in an all-share deal. In addition, Mr Edmonds will promote Toad through his various activities, which range from his Crinkley Bottom theme park to producing London's Proms in the Park. He will receive the maximum payout only if Toad shares pass 240p, and if Toad becomes a familiar name to 30 per cent of Britons by 1999.

Chris Evans, the biotech entrepreneur who floated Toad, said the move was designed to reverse the collapse in Toad's share price, down from 115p to 39p since flotation in 1995. Mr Edmonds said his involvement went far beyond a celebrity endorsement. "I will be right in the firing line taking the business forward," he said. Toad shares rose 1½p to 41p yesterday.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET	
FTSE 100	4580.4 (+42.9)
Yield	2.51%
FTSE All shares	2186.18 (+14.26)
Nikkei	20061.81 (+12.81)
New York	
Dow Jones	7159.10 (+73.45)
S&P Composite	822.94 (+7.32)

US RATE	
Federal Funds	5½% (5½%)
Long Bond	96½% (95½%)
Yield	6.84% (6.87%)

LONDON MONEY	
3-month Interbank	5½% (6½%)
Life long gilt	11½% (11½%)
Future (June)	

STERLING	
New York	1.6205 (1.6155)
London	
DM	1.6207 (1.6285)
DM	2.7672 (2.8138)
FF	9.3380 (9.4982)
SP	2.3378 (2.3874)
Yen	350.82 (354.31)
£ Index	98.8 (100.3)

DOLLAR	
London	
DM	1.7078 (1.7185)
FF	5.7729 (5.8000)
SP	1.4448 (1.4584)
Yen	152.82 (155.09)
£ Index	104.8 (105.2)
Tokyo close Yen	123.78

NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent 15-day (Jul)	\$18.55 (\$18.20)

GOLD	
London close	\$343.80 (\$340.85)

* denotes midday trading price

Tempus, page 28

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By JON ASHWORTH

A tip-off led the police to a safe deposit box in Old Broad Street. Inside, they found documents acknowledging that the Gulf Group, Gokal's company, owed \$1.2 billion to BCCI — evidence that was to hold the case together. Detective Superintendent Ohlson says: "Sometimes you get these wonderful champagne moments during an investigation. This was one of them."

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY AND ROBERT MILLER

NAPF, said: "We have deep concerns about some of the Government's projected tax policies — in particular any reduction or abolition of the ACT credits."

ACT is the 20 per cent tax currently levied on all company dividends. Pension funds can claim this back on the grounds that the tax will eventually be collected on the money paid out as a monthly pension. Paul Myrnes, chairman of Gartmore, part of the NatWest Group, said: "ACT is a horsepolt that the Chancellor will find it difficult not to dip his mits into."

Outside the NAPF conference hall, senior fund manag-

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

The resolution is being lodged at Shell's annual meeting next Wednesday by Pirc, the campaigning investment advisory service. But Sir Martin Jacobm, chairman of Prudential, said at yesterday's annual meeting: "We take environmental concerns seriously but it is unrealistic to suggest that the world will use less energy, and we will not be using our position to put pressure on Shell."



**BY KEITH RODGERS
AND JASON NISSE**

A decision is due to be made in July. London Clubs has withdrawn its offer pending the MMC's ruling.

Many in the casino industry believe that London Clubs may now attract a bid from Ladbrokes, which has signalled that it may return to casinos.

DAVID WALSH, president of Bre-X Minerals, has filed an official complaint, with the police alleging that his company was the victim of a massive fraud. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said Mr. Walsh had not named any perpetrator. So far, at least eight class-action suits have been filed, alleging fraud, and naming Mr. Walsh and Bre-X as defendants. The RCMP and the Alberta and Ontario Securities Commissions have begun inquiries.

By ERIC REGULY

THE success of the re-released *Star Wars* trilogy and improved results from its British newspaper division helped The News Corporation, owner of *The Times*, to report a sharp increase in profits.

BY ROBERT MILLER

A MAN alleged to have held cheques from Bank of America worth \$311 million was yesterday remanded in custody for a second week at Bow Street Magistrates' Court in central London.

Edison films have generated US domestic box office sales of \$249 million since their release in January. Their success helped to lift operating income in the filmed entertainment division more than 100 per cent to \$223 million.

not performing well at the box office. Advertising gains, increased circulation revenues and lower paper prices combined to lift operating profits in the newspaper division by 23 percent to \$236 million.

PIA sets

BURNS ANDERSON, one of the UK's biggest network of financial advisers, could be forced to merge with its

The ombudsman is to examine the cases of ten investors who put money with Steeds Financial Services, for

shares in Villa Investments Plan, a Spanish property scheme. When Elands went in

charged with conspiracy to defraud and an attempt to obtain \$200,000 from Michael Armstrong, and of having in his possession a Bank of America cheque in the sum of \$17.5 million.

Deputy Jeffrey Yearwood, the magistrate, told Mr Boothe, who did not apply for bail: "Owing to the seriousness and the gravity of the charges, I am not prepared to grant bail."

sights on

investors found that shares in the plan had been sold more than once. Faced with losses

The attempt by Burns Anderson in court to challenge whether the matter fell within

nity cover. However, insurers have previously been reluctant to pay out on these suits

defendants. The RCMP and the Alberta and Ontario Securities Commissions have begun inquiries.

Danmark to	11.11	10.28	S Africa Pt	7.28	
Denmark to	3.68	8.19	Spain Pt	345.00	12.23
France Fr	8.78	8.08			
Germany On	2.92	2.70	Switzerland Fr	2.48	23.22
Greece Or	4.33	4.29	Turkey Line	2274.00	21.31
Hong Kong S	13.28	12.16	USA S	1.71	1.59
Iceland	1.27	1.62			
India to	1.13	1.13	Notes for small destinations		
Israel Ship	5.90	5.35	not fully supplied by shipyard		
Italy to	2.08	2.08	P.C. direct rates apply to trans-shipment		
Japan Ship	2.08	2.08	charges. Rates are in place of track-		

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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

[illegible]

BMDs: (PRIVAT

BIRTHS

BARR - On 4th
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Alexander.

BECKIE - On 1
Portland Ho-
and Christo-
Natasha, a sis-
and Henry.

BELL - On Mi-
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Andrew, a
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CANTER KEAL
May 2nd 1999
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son, William

COLLINS - On 2
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Charles, a dau-
Anne Truscot
S.A.

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DODGE - On Marianne (née Peter, a son, James, a birth Emily and Oli
EDEN - On Ma Matilda Hor Kong, to Joann and Jack, a Cuzenac, a

SEANVILLE - O
Nicola and
daughter, Ella
Alice and Gene

MAYNERS - O Mrs.
Beth (nee
Richard, a
Gohndella Rice

HOWARD - O On
the Royal
Hospital, to
(Johnson) a
daughter, Alice

BLIDGE - O Mrs.
(nee Conington)
daughter, Rebecca
Koro, a sister
and Laura, her

MICHAEL SCOTT - O
to Harzette (a
and Simon,
Chadwick.

PARKIN SHEP - O
Tuesday May
and Danny, a

* Available in hard copy only. \$1.00

□ Business in need of a coherent tax target □ Seeking fresh impetus for a sensible idea □ Slapped wrist for train operator

Sterling threat covered in confusion

GRIM WARNINGS about the perils of living with a strong pound have now developed into such a clamour that one suspects the chorus might be a synchronised sigh of relief from businessmen who have found a useful excuse for some disappointing figures.

The stock market's reaction to BT's plaintive moanings yesterday indicated that some shareholders were not entirely convinced that sterling should be held entirely to blame for the company's latest profit slide.

For Ian Strachan there should have been some compensation for the pain of seeing £1.7 billion stripped from the valuation of his company in the fact that the culpable pound took a beating yesterday. But his slide should be seen as a warning sign, a headstrong response to a misguided fear that the Government was about to rush into the ERM. It will take more than rumour-mongering to bring the pound down to the levels that would make signing up to European Monetary Union feasible and, simultaneously, stop the whingeing from exporters. What the whingers now call for is a moratorium on interest rate rises that would strengthen the currency. If the Government wants

to dampen the economy, they say, it should use taxes.

If the sight of the business community telling a Labour Government to raise taxes seems slightly surreal, the variety of their thoughts on quite where the increased tax burden should fall is positively bizarre.

The Institute of Directors would like to see public spending cut further but is prepared to accept the abolition of mortgage interest rate relief to bridge the fiscal gap. But this offends the British Chambers of Commerce, which is worried its construction members will suffer from a slowdown in the housing market. The BCC has called for a penny rise in income tax to take the pressure off rates — utterly irrelevant since Labour has already ruled out any rises in income tax rates.

The Federation of Small Businesses is pushing for two-tier interest rates. The Confederation of British Industry is yet to spell out what measures it would like to see taken, in spite of its

persistent calls for tax, rather than interest rate, rises.

Without a coherent tax target, business is in danger of getting all the rises it has called for, but not in the form it wants. Companies are as attractive a target for Labour as consumers. Only British Steel, which repeated its warnings about the threat of sterling yesterday, seems to have accepted that a mixture of personal and corporate tax increases is realistic. The CBI will not find itself popular with members, let alone the National Association of Pension Funds, if its campaign leads to increases in corporation and pension taxes.

New initiative needed for PFI

THE Private Finance Initiative was a wizard wheeze, dreamt up by the last Government as a means of bringing important public building projects to fruition without burdening the public finances. New Labour can see the



joys of PFI, a wondrous way of providing all those hospitals that local MPs have promised to Labour voters without upsetting Chancellor Gordon Brown's pledges to stick to Conservative expenditure strictures.

But construction companies have been understandably wary of PFI. Big projects involve risk and builders just recovering from the hammering they took during the recession have been reluctant to walk into new dangers. The few PFI schemes which have moved beyond the realms of wishful thinking are those where the risks have been minimal and the rewards potentially

very attractive, such as the fast rail link to the Channel Tunnel.

The National Health Service has come up with numerous potential PFI schemes but almost all have stalled. The contractors prepared to tender have found the process hugely expensive, with specifications changing along the way and clients who often seem unaware of commercial reality. And even if practical hurdles could be overcome, there remains one over-riding difficulty: the builder who invests in a state of the art regional hospital is frighteningly dependent on one major client. Without substantial guarantees of future NHS policies and pocket depth, most companies would regard it as foolhardy to take on such a project.

But these obstacles should not be insurmountable. The principle of PFI is a sensible one. If it is to be put to effective use, it requires a different mind-set on the part of those in the public sector who want the involvement of the commercial world. If Malcolm Bates, the former dep-

uty managing director of GEC, can achieve that, he will have done a service to both the public and the private sectors.

Regulation off the rails

WOULD-BE commuters on South West Trains must have hoped that the company's dismal failure to provide a proper service would be punished on a scale commensurate with the misery they had to endure. Yesterday's news that rail regulator John O'Brien has instead whisked a wet lettuce leaf across their wrists will be a grave disappointment.

John Prescott, the burly new transport supremo, will have taken some persuading that SWT should not be heavily fined for the delays this spring, but merely docked its subsidy by a certain amount for each cancelled train. This is equivalent to setting parking fines by reference to the cost of waiting a

meter, but it is all the franchising director claims he can do.

He insists that the Railway Act 1993 does not allow any other course of action. This is arguable, and his office may have relied on promises that the SWT service would improve rather earlier than it actually did. This is by now a sterile argument. The best we can hope will come out of the affair is a tightening of his powers, ideally to a "fine-as-you-go" approach.

Mr O'Brien, who had a "lively discussion" with Mr Prescott yesterday, has been told to come up with ideas. Failure might see his £135,000-a-year contract, due to end in August 1999, being cancelled as abruptly as some of those trains.

Short-sighted lady

THE record prison sentence for the BCCI fraudster does not mark the end of the dreadful saga. We may yet face the spectacle of the Bank of England being sued for its failure to protect citizens from the bogus bank. It is to be hoped that the Government's shake-up in Threadneedle Street will ensure that the Old Lady's determined blindness to BICC's shortcomings is never repeated.

TeleWest ready for digital launch

By ERIC REGUY

TELEWEST Communications, the second largest cable company, said it will be ready to launch digital TV services, with as many as 150 channels, by the end of this year.

Stephen Davidson, chief executive, said the company may buy the services offered by British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB), the group led by BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, and BT, to help to make its digital package more attractive. BIB services will allow viewers with digital set-top boxes to shop, do their banking, book holidays and play computer games from home.

TeleWest is considering raising about \$300 million in "junk bond" debt to finance its move into the digital market. The money would be used to estab-

lish its networks to digital technology and buy set-top boxes for cable TV customers.

TeleWest, downplayed suggestions that it will have to form its own alliance or acquire other cable companies to improve its fortunes. TeleWest has been overshadowed by Cable and Wireless Communications, created last month by the merger of Mercury and three large cable companies.

TeleWest reported a pre-tax loss of £69.5 million in the quarter to March 31 (£53.4 million loss). The company said the loss was expected and was because of continued spending on expanding its network, which is now 68 per cent built.

The Times, page 28

Kwik Save paying £25m for restructuring advice

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

KWIK SAVE, the struggling discount supermarket chain, is set to make provisions for £18 million over the next two years to cover payments to Andersen Consulting, the management consultancy working on its restructuring.

Andersen Consulting has already been paid about £7 million for advice given in the last nine months. Kwik Save's shares fell yesterday after it revealed that despite the first restructuring efforts, customer numbers have fallen while current comparable store sales are down 6 per cent. Graeme Bowler, chief executive, said sales looked particularly poor

because trading at the same time last year was boosted by a vigorous price campaign.

The shares closed down 17p at 291p. Analysts said that they were confused by the company's strategy and questioned the amount being spent on consultants. "The place is being run by Andersen's. Why don't they just get a new management team?" one said.

Mr Bowler insisted that the board had the full support of its main shareholder, Dairy Farm, which has a 29.9 per cent stake.

Pre-tax profit in the six months to March 15 was £40.7 million (£44.2 million). The fall was due to the £4.1 million

restructuring provision taken in the first half. The provision for the full year is expected to be about £10 million and about £18 million next year.

Like-for-like sales during the first half were down 1.6 per cent. Mr Bowler said that despite the continued fall in recent weeks, he hopes to have neutral or positive sales growth by the end of this calendar year.

The first fruits of the restructuring, which began last November, is a new-format store in Northwich, Cheshire, which was opened last month. A further four "new generation" stores are set to open this year and a roll-out across the

1,000-store chain will then take up to five years.

The company, which has now carried out around half of the 107 store closures it announced last year, has just launched 152 own-brand products and will bring in another 150 this year. It is aiming for 1,000 own-brand products.

Capital expenditure has been held down in the first half to £6.5 million and is set to come in at £35 million in the full year. Earnings per share were 16.99p (18.45p) and the interim dividend, payable on July 7, has been maintained at 5.95p per share.

The Times, page 28

Body Shop faces French closures

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE Body Shop has set aside £6.5 million to cover the possible cost of pulling out of France, where it saw sales plunge by 14 per cent last year.

Gordon Roddick, chairman, said he hoped to avoid closing the 32 shops, which account for just 1.4 per cent of group sales. The franchise agreement with the current holder, who is British, is being terminated. Body Shop is in talks with possible French partners.

The £6.5 million exceptional charge meant that Body Shop's pre-tax profit for the year to March 1 fell from £32.7 million to £31.7 million. Retail sales grew 8 per cent to £622.5 million.

Mr Roddick blamed the strikes and terrorist attacks in Paris last year for the decline

in French sales. The agreement with the current franchisee has been ended amicably, he said. "He [the franchisee] did very well from 1991 to 1995, but France as an investment needs more resources than he could put into it."

Like-for-like sales in the first eight weeks are down 2 per cent, with Asia down 10 per cent. Mr Roddick said he was not worried about this because it reflected the busy opening programme, which has put total retail sales up 7 per cent worldwide and 18 per cent in Asia.

Earnings per share, including exceptional items, were 9.2p (9.8p) and the final dividend is 3.2p, payable on May 23, giving a total for the year of 4.7p, up from 3.4p.

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JAGUAR

DON'T DREAM IT. DRIVE IT.

Terror of the 'Tartan tax' dampens the joy of devolution for Scottish business

In the early hours of last Friday morning, the ashes of former Conservative Ministers Ian Lang, Michael Forsyth and Malcolm Rifkind contrasted with the pure joy shown by Scottish nationalists shouting: "Our country will be free." But before the last cocktail of whisky and 10th Brn was drained, Labour was at work drafting the devolution Bill that will, it hopes, give Scots enough power to pacify them without putting the fear of God into the business community.

The details will come out directly after the Queen's Speech next week — ahead of a Scottish referendum expected in September. The routing of the Scottish Conservatives — standing on a preserve the union ticket — shows a groundswell of support for a separate parliament for the first time since 1707. The business community cannot ignore it. Some staunch supporters of the union — such as Lord Weir of the Glasgow engineer Weir Group — have attacked the whole concept as a potential source of "aggravation" between London and Edinburgh. The idea of a glorified city council sitting in

Edinburgh is ghastly," was his reaction. At the same time others, such as Liam Kane, chief executive of Mirror Group's Scottish operations, have pinned their colours proudly to the mast of devolution.

However, despite warnings by Ian Lang during the election that devolution would scare off investment in Scotland, most Scottish business leaders are fairly sanguine. Their big concern, though, is the "Tartan tax". They are wary of how much tax-raising power the Scottish parliament might have.

Tony Blair's supposed gaffe — when he compared a Scottish parliament's tax-raising powers to an "English parish council" — have not settled the nerves. Scottish & Newcastle, the leisure and brewing group whose headquarters

stand in the shadow of the proposed Scottish parliament building, is one of the few willing to articulate the concerns that many business leaders voice in private, but are loath to utter publicly for fear of alienating the Government and their workforce. Brian Stewart, S&N chief executive, says that if Scotland has a higher personal tax rate than the UK this could hit future investment north of the border. He is concerned about tax not only cutting the amount of disposable income available to spend in Scotland but also putting up employment costs — and S&N employs 4,000 in Scotland. "Managers whom we would hope to be attracting to come and work for us or relocate from England to Scotland might be put off by higher taxes. If in general the tax-raising

powers increase the cost base, that would have a negative effect on investment."

David Mackay, chief executive of John Menzies, also thinks that increased taxes might cause problems. "I think there are worries about devolution. Especially if it is accompanied by tax which would disadvantage many employers in Scotland."

One tax Menzies is particularly concerned about is business rates. Labour has said it might give the power to set business rate levels back to local councils, raising the prospect of a return to the situation in the mid-1980s when it was more expensive to occupy shops in Princes Street, Edinburgh, than in Oxford Street, London. A great deal has to do with the level of

tax increase. "A penny on income tax is neither here nor there," said one Scottish financier. "Three pence might be different or an extra 10p on top rates."

The so-called Charlotte Square mafia — the community of life insurers headquartered in Edinburgh — lobbied aggressively in the run-up to the election to minimise the powers of a Scottish assembly, although the Labour Party claimed the support of both Scottish Widows and Standard Life for its devolution proposals. Tom King, corporate affairs director at Standard Life, admits the group has had a programme of winning and dining Scottish Labour MPs in an attempt to make them understand what the life companies would be prepared to live with. He points

out that Alastair Darling, the Chief Secretary at the Treasury, is MP for the constituency that includes Charlotte Square, and with it about 90 per cent of the Scottish financial services industry.

The Scottish financial community appears to be reassured that the Scottish parliament will not have power to raise corporate tax rates or regulate Scottish business differently from Westminster. "Nothing should be done that affects the Scottish financial community's ability to compete in England," said Mr King.

The banking community is similarly relaxed. "Our regulator will still be the Bank of England," said Peter Woodfield, of the Royal Bank of Scotland. "Well, if it remains the Bank of England. At least it will be the same regulator as the London-based banks."

Labour appears to have won over the financial community. The battle will be to win over the rest of the business community, some of whom think they are the effective opposition in Scotland now that Scottish Tories have been routed.

JASON NISSE

ECONOMIC VIEW

ANATOLE KALETSKY

Second thoughts on independent Bank

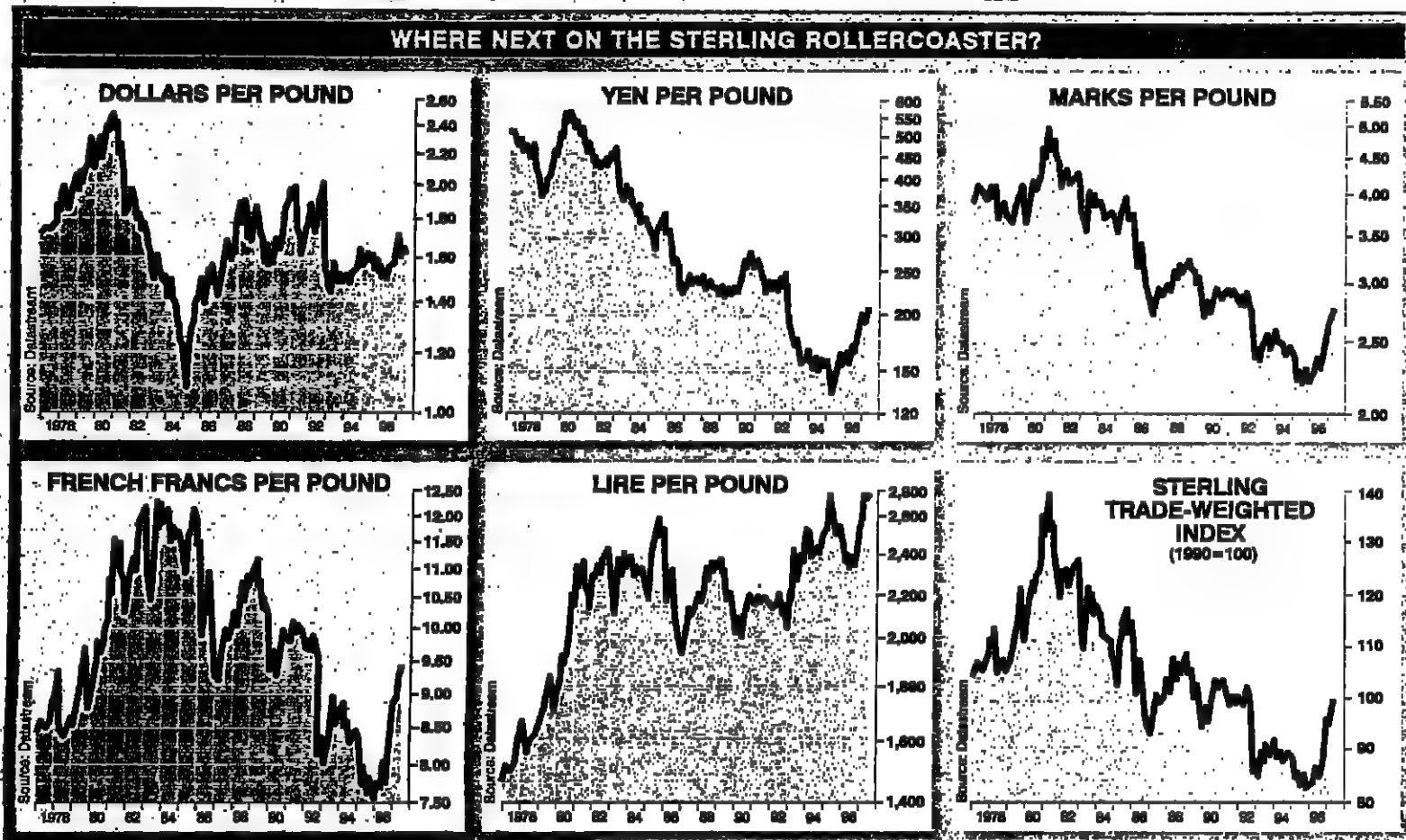
Brown's move may have the opposite effect to the one he intended

Sometimes an event comes so suddenly and is so far-reaching in its implications, that even experienced journalists, whose job it is to think fast and express themselves succinctly, do not have the time or the space to get anywhere near the truth. I have to admit to such a professional lapse last Tuesday, when Gordon Brown announced his decision to make the Bank of England independent. To readers who were shocked by my attack on Mr Brown's decision, I wish to apologise: my harsh words were not nearly harsh enough.

By concentrating on the theoretical objections to the principle of central bank independence, I glossed over the more important practical issues which could unleash the financial nemesis discussed in this column last week. Specifically, I misunderstood the effect this decision could have on the pound.

Specifically, central bank independence is more likely to drive the currency up than down. By doing this, it could disrupt completely economic plans of the new Government — not least by breaking up the strange consensus which has formed in the business community in favour of higher tax. And once the economy has suffered beyond repair from the damage done by an overvalued pound and an overly tight monetary policy, the sterling bubble will, of course, burst proving yet again the iron law of left-wing politics in Britain: all Labour governments are brought down by financial crises the seeds of which they sow during their first days of power.

Let us start from the premise discussed on this page last week: that Britain's biggest economic problem today is the malignant hardness of the pound. The high exchange rate is slowly but surely driving out of business the few manufacturers and exporters that es-



caped from the two dreadful currency squeezes of 1979-81 and 1990-92. The key question now is whether Bank independence will make it easier or harder to manage the transition to a competitive exchange rate in a non-inflationary and non-disruptive way. The conventional wisdom screams: "Of course it will — the independent Bank will boost international confidence in Britain and guarantee low inflation."

What nobody stops to ask is whether a boost to international confidence is what Britain now needs. It certainly seems a strange prescription for a country whose gravest economic problem is an inflow of hot money from Japanese bond investors and US currency speculators seeking high yields. There are times when financial credibility can do more harm than good. A country whose currency is being driven up in a speculative boom-bust cycle needs rather less confidence, not more. If that sounds ridiculous, remember what happened to Japan in 1993, Germany since 1992 and America in the

mid-1980s. Or closer to home, reflect on the wreckage left behind by the orgy of over-enthusiasm for British assets during the 1979-81 Thatcher recession and again in the 1987-88 Lawson boom.

The Labour Government, to its credit, understands the potential problem. It wants the pound to weaken and is even prepared to say so more or less openly, as evidenced by the brilliantly timed leak which knocked sterling down 3 per cent in less than an hour on Wednesday night. Whatever may be said about Mr Brown and his lieutenants they are not stupid. The question remains whether they can get the markets to do what they want and push sterling back to a more competitive level by clever manipulation alone. Experience suggests they will fail. Many other clever governments have tried to influence exchange rates by words alone. Few have succeeded until they have backed their words with significant changes in economic policy.

The chances are, therefore, that Mr Brown will not reverse the upward trend in the

pound simply by saying that he wants the pound to fall. There will have to be a significant policy change. Again, Mr Brown's people have foreseen the problem — or think they have. They view central bank independence as only one step in a two-stage strategy for rebalancing the economy. The second step will be a tough Budget which will raise taxes, reduce the public sector borrowing requirement, dampen consumer demand and inflation and thereby relieve the upward pressure on interest rates.

Lower interest rates, in turn, will push the pound downwards, make manufacturing industry more competitive and restore the jobs lost through higher taxes. It sounds like a textbook prescription for a carefully-controlled currency depreciation. Indeed it is exactly the kind of policy urged on the new Government in this column a week ago. Why, then, do I suddenly suspect it will not work?

This is where we come back to Tuesday's fateful decision

on the Bank of England. The most critical element of this whole policy package is the willingness to ease interest rates aggressively enough to pull the pound down. Without the critical ingredient of looser monetary policy the whole prescription will not work. In fact, it will probably achieve the opposite of the result intended.

If investors are confident that monetary policy will be eased promptly in response to higher taxes, they can probably be relied on to sell sterling. But if interest rates remain high or rise further after a tight Budget, the short-term reaction of international investors could be to buy more pounds. Britain already has the highest interest rates among G7 countries. That has made UK government bonds one of the world's best investments in the past 12 months. Now Mr Brown has offered investors the anti-inflationary reassurance of an independent central bank. Next month he will follow that with a Budget that puts Britain on course to repay the national debt. Why should that suddenly persuade them to dump the high-

yielding gilts and sterling deposits that have served them so well in the past year? The only possible reason would be the certain knowledge that interest rates will be deliberately managed to depreciate the pound.

Until Tuesday, there would have been ample reason for this view, since the Chancellor, who is known to favour a lower exchange rate, was directly in control of interest rates. Now that the Bank is in charge, the whole calculation is thrown into doubt. It is true that Eddie George said on Tuesday that sterling is "uncomfortably strong". The reason he gave, however, had nothing to do with the travails of manufacturing industry or the need to sustain economic growth after a tight Budget. "We have talked repeatedly about the dilemmas (the strong pound) poses for monetary policy," he said.

Could it be that Mr George's main reason for unhappiness about the present exchange rate is simply that the strong pound has prevented him from raising interest rates even higher? If this is true, the pound currently stands at DM 2.77 even after the falls the report provoked, all this fuss seems a touch academic.

The Treasury describes Bridge News as "competent", with "good contacts" at Westminster. A spokesman denied the inevitable assumption that the Labour source was actually Ed Balls, adviser to Gordon Brown. "He would probably be one of the people in the category who would themselves ask who Bridge News was. He would not normally speak to a financial news agency." So who did? And why?

MARTIN WALLER

the water slide. Biggest holder of Dalgely, as we pointed out, was our favourite long-term investor, PDM. Biggest investor in BTR? Er, PDM again.

Hot air

DELEGATES in Harrogate for the two-day National Association of Pension Funds conference yesterday worked themselves into such a fury over what Gordon Brown may or may not do to them that the fire alarms went off and the hotel had to be evacuated.

Party line

THE news that Britain was going to rejoin the exchange-rate mechanism was so ludicrous — Labour within a week of the election to repeat the mistake that lost it for the Tories? — that I immediately wondered if someone in a bit of a hole on the currency markets and friends working on the newspapers might be trying to get out of it.

The report was sourced by Reuters to something called Bridge News, which turns out to be the old Knight Ridder news agency. Chris Davison, the writer, stands by the story, saying he did talk to a "Labour economic source" on Wednesday night, who actually said, as his report made clear, that entry at DM2.50 might be "attractive". As

the pound currently stands at DM 2.77 even after the falls the report provoked, all this fuss seems a touch academic.

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Sans of time

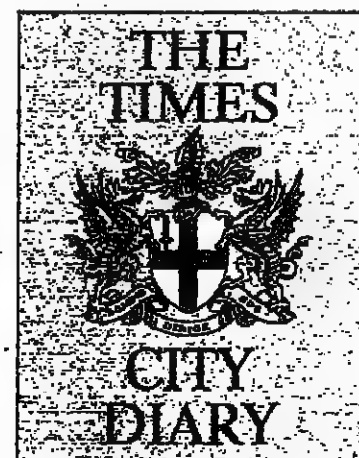
AS IF to prove that the world has now gone quite mad and that the role of the satirist is redundant, I can exclusively reveal to you the BBC's new logo. A few months ago, when news broke of the decision to update the old one just six years after the last revamp, the Beeb was forced to deny reports that the exercise would cost £5 million. Senior managers have just received a briefing explaining, *inter alia*, that "the existing logo doesn't work on screen" and that "doing nothing was not an option". They will also, naturally, have to sit through a 12-minute video explaining how all this is to be sold to their subordinates. As you see, the Corporation has bought some lettering

from the Early Learning Centre or, perhaps, merely hit the old logo with a hammer until it stood upright. The design uses a typeface designed by the artist Eric Gill, whose work already graces Broadcasting House, so the BBC has, so to speak, kept it all within the family. I am sure Gill would have approved.

OF WHOM do I speak? "He has a long history of innovation in consumer applications for tried and tested technology," Sir Clive Sinclair says. Alan Sugar, perhaps? The quote comes from Dr Chris Evans, himself no slouch at the application of technology. His company Toad did a deal yesterday with the Unique Group, and he was referring to its proprietor — Noel Edmunds, the innovative genius who brought you Crinkley Bottom, the Gunge Bath and Mr Blobby.

K factor

AS WE continue to find honest work for those unsettled by last week's landslide, a name emerges as a front-runner to head a new all-embracing City watchdog. Step forward Howard Davies, deputy governor of the Bank of England.



The reasoning goes thus: if Gavyn Davies (or virtually anyone else other than H. Davies) is appointed as the second deputy governor in charge of economic and monetary affairs, the prospect of being left merely policing UK banks is none too appealing. And then there is the potential for embarrassing confusion over names. Far better a high-profile and challenging task like the much-needed reform of City regulation? Just a thought, Howard. There must be a K in it for you.

ANOTHER day, another profits warning from another blue chip company. BTR shares lost 13 per cent of their value yesterday, following Dalgely on Wednesday down

Down with the old logo...



...long live the new logo.



TRUST ME

goodwill n. 1 document in which you are left something of value 2 what you should extend to others when this occurs 3 the good reputation of a business and its contacts with its customers.

partnership n. 1 seagoing accommodation for lawyers, accountants etc. 2 unregistered business where two or more people share the risks and profits equally.

joint venture n. 1 trip inspired by illegal substance (orig. *sixties*) 2 annual orthopaedic holiday 3 business planned by two or more persons, companies etc.

bond n. 1 attach fingers together with superglue 2 agent with liking for dry martinis (*shaken, not stirred*) 3 contract document promising to repay money.

flotation n. 1 launching of a commercial enterprise on the Stock Exchange 2 life belt or similar device required if enterprise sinks.

For the definitive answers to your legal questions, call Rowe & Maw and put your faith in the law.

Rowe & Maw
LAWYERS FOR BUSINESS
20 Black Friars Lane, London EC4A 6HD
Tel: 0171 248 4282

4 22 30 EQUITY PRICES

Shares close at best of day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
10.50	10.40	Guinness	10.45	+0.05	4.5%	18.5
10.20	10.10	Heineken	10.15	+0.05	4.2%	19.0
10.10	10.00	Carlsberg	10.05	+0.05	4.0%	20.0
10.00	9.90	Asahi	9.95	+0.05	3.8%	21.0
9.80	9.70	Daewoo	9.75	+0.05	3.5%	22.0

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BREWERY, PUBS & REST

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	Yield	P/E
15.00	14.80	Asahi	14.90	+0.10	3.5%	22.0
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8.50	8.30	Primark	8.40	+0.10	3.2%	21.0
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BUILDING MATERIALS

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BIRTHS

McAlpine looks at sales to offset Raine bid cost

By MARTIN BARROW

ALFRED McALPINE has identified disposals that could raise up to £25 million against the £44.3 million cost of its agreed takeover bid for Raine, the fellow housebuilder and construction company.

Oliver Whitehead, chief executive of McAlpine, said the disposals were likely to cover housing and investments in California, residential land in Majorca and some peripheral UK property interests. These

were valued at £30 million in Raine's last accounts.

The takeover of Raine, signalled in mid-April, propels McAlpine into the top ten of the UK's biggest housebuilders with a combined output of 3,500 housing completions a year. Mr Whitehead said: "It's a fair price and I would expect the acquisition to produce some earnings enhancement in its first full year of ownership."

The integration of Raine's Hassell Homes subsidiary with McAlpine's residential housing division will give us a bigger slice of the UK

market and put us into areas where we have not previously been represented." These comprise Cumbria, Northumbria and Yorkshire. In the three overlapping areas of the Midlands, the North West and South West of England, McAlpine plans to close three regional offices, which will result in a "significant" reduction in central overheads and operating costs.

Sir Terence Harrison, the chairman, said: "We are convinced the combination of the two groups offers an exceptional opportunity to create a major player in the housebuilding and

construction sectors for the benefit of all the shareholders in the enlarged group."

McAlpine's all-share offer of 23.57p a share represents a premium of 34.7 per cent over Raine's share price immediately before the announcement that the pair were in bid talks on April 18. Yesterday Raine shares rose 2p to 20p. McAlpine fell 13p to 154p. McAlpine is also calling on shareholders for £29.7 million through a two-for-seven convertible rights issue at an equivalent price of 142p a share. It will be used to reduce borrowing of the enlarged group.

Lonrho sells Swaziland sugar stake for £227m

By ADAM JONES

LONRHO's break-up programme marched on yesterday with the sale of its 94.25 per cent stake in Lonrho Sugar Corporation, based in Swaziland, for 1.633 billion rand (£227 million).

The sale to Illovo Sugars of South Africa creates Africa's largest sugar group. The extra strain placed on the currency markets by the deal pushed the rand to its weakest levels against the dollar in two months.

The deal was widely expected as part of Lonrho's drive to get rid of its peripheral businesses and release value to shareholders, who have seen the sprawling conglomerate's share price halve from its peak of more than 300p in the Eighties.

The strategy had been initiated

by Dieter Bock, the former chief executive, who cut the last of his links with the company in March.

Nicholas Morrell, the new chief executive, said: "The disposal of our shareholding in Lonrho Sugar Corporation represents a further important step in realising the inherent value of Lonrho's businesses, and in reducing group debt."

A demerger, as opposed to outright sale, had been considered for Lonrho Sugar Corp but it would not have met the Inland Revenue's criteria for tax exemption.

Lonrho Sugar owns, operates and manages sugar cane plantations in South Africa, Mauritius, Malawi and Swaziland. Its shares, listed in Johannesburg and Swaziland, had moved up from 12.6 rand to R16.2 in anticipation of the sale. The company made a profit before tax equal to £27.8 million in the year ended March 1996.

The sale price of the shares at R13.9 each and the full issued share capital at R1.723 billion. Illovo, which has a 44 per cent share in the domestic market, recorded sales of R974 million for the half-year to the end of March.

Illovo is funding about two thirds of the purchase through an underwritten share issue. The rest will come from cash and the issue of new preference shares. It said that merger benefits of at least £28 million a year have been identified, and earnings would increase from September next year. Anglo American and Tate & Lyle had been tipped as potential bidders.

Lonrho has assurances from CG Smith Foods, owner of 69 per cent of Illovo, that it will vote through the purchase at an extraordinary general meeting. All Lonrho Sugar shareholders will be entitled to receive a final dividend of R0.25 per share as part of the deal, in respect of annual results that are due to be announced soon.

Times, page 28



Bill Simpson, with samples of wood finishes, expects improvement in the cabinets division

Silentnight boosted by consumer recovery

By ADAM JONES

THE consumer recovery helped to push annual pre-tax profits up to £14.3 million (£11.1 million) at Silentnight, the bed and cabinet maker.

Turnover for the 12 months to February 1 rose 12 per cent to £212 million as customers drifted back to high street showrooms and cabinet raw material costs eased.

Sales at the UK beds division rose 12 per cent to £113.5 million and operating profit rose 49 per cent to £3.3 million.

The cabinets division recorded sales of £59 million (£54 million). Its margins were hit in 1995 by rises in the cost of MDF, its main raw material.

In America, where Silentnight trades under the Serta brand, turnover increased 37 per cent to £24.6 million. The company has factories in Boston and Pittsburgh and believes there are efficiencies still to be made, particularly in Pittsburgh. It is also looking at possible US acquisitions, although nothing is imminent.

Germany, where consumers have been squeezed by the fiscal restraints required for economic and monetary union in Europe, proved to be the toughest market and profits only held steady.

Bill Simpson, chief executive, said the group's early targets for 1997 were being achieved, with improvements particularly expected for the cabinets arm. Overall growth, however, is expected to be slower than in 1996. A final dividend of 7p (5.25p) is due on July 7, making a total of 10p (8p).

Hongkong Telecom lifts profits 12.5%

FROM A CORRESPONDENT IN HONG KONG

Hong Kong Telecommunications achieved a 12.5 per cent rise in net profits to HK\$11.18 billion (£890 million) in the year to March 31, but analysts questioned its long-term prospects in an increasingly competitive cellular phone market.

"Results like this are too good to be true," said Dick Brown, deputy chief executive of Hongkong Telecom and chief executive of Britain's Cable and Wireless, which holds 53.5 per cent of it.

Linus Cheung, Hongkong Telecom's chief executive, said that it was rebalancing its portfolio of services, and lessening reliance on international direct dial (IDD) revenue. He said that IDD revenue is now 53 per cent of total revenue, down from more than 60 per cent two years ago, but declined to disclose the utility's share of the IDD market.

The utility faces rising competition for international calls from callback operators, in spite of a theoretical monopoly until 2006, rivals must route their international traffic through Hongkong Telecom.

Hongkong Telecom declined to comment on speculation that it may take a partner from mainland China.

Football suing over illicit TV broadcasts

By JASON NISSE

FOOTBALL is taking High Court action to stop pubs and clubs, largely in the North of England, illegally showing live Premiership matches.

Writs have been issued against a dozen distributors of equipment that can pick up signals from TV2, which has the contract to show FA Cup and Premiership games live in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Many pubs have bought the satellite equipment and have been showing live football coverage without paying BSkyB, which is 40 per cent owned by The News Corpora-

tion, parent company of The Times. BSkyB charges pubs by the size of audience they attract, generating around £30 million of income a year.

The Premiership is particularly unhappy about the showing of Saturday games, which are not shown live on British TV. Under the deal with TV2 live Saturday games are shown during the winter football break in Scandinavian.

Ian Fletcher, chairman of D&C Satellite and Television in Cheshire, one of the groups being sued, said: "It is no offence to sell equipment that can pick up these signals."

Northern Rock chief dies

By ANNE ABERNETHY

CHRISTOPHER SHARP, managing director of the Northern Rock Building Society, died suddenly yesterday morning, aged 57. He had suffered a heart attack.

The Northern Rock, the seventh largest society, will become a bank in October in a £12 billion stock market flotation. This society confirmed yesterday that these plans remained unchanged.

Leo Finn, the society's deputy managing director, who takes over from Mr Sharp said: "It is Chris' greatest desire that Northern Rock complete its conversion to plc status on schedule and to plan, and so remain a vibrant, independent force, based in the North East. This is precisely what will now take place."

Mr Sharp's association with the Northern Rock began in 1970 when he joined the society as its in-house lawyer. He became chief executive in 1982 and managing director in 1985. A graduate of Pembroke College, Oxford, he had previously pursued a career in law.

During Mr Sharp's time at the top, the Northern Rock has seen considerable expansion. Last year, it took 10 per cent of the market in new loans. It gained second place in the UBS Major Players league which rates the larger building societies on a number of performance criteria.

Hundreds queue at the bank — to own it

FROM RACHEL BRIDGES IN SYDNEY

COLONIAL State Bank has received hundreds of applications from people keen to own their own bank since it unveiled plans to franchise out 60 branches six weeks ago.

Peter Smedley, managing director of Colonial, the life assurance group that owns the bank, said they had received more than 850 applications from potential franchisees within the first two days of making the an-

nouncement, and that many more applications had continued to arrive since then.

Under the scheme, which is believed to be the first true banking franchise in the world, franchisees must pay an upfront fee of A\$60,000 (£30,000) for the right to run a branch for five years and an additional A\$45,000 to meet the cost of training staff. They must also lodge a refundable A\$200,000 security deposit with the bank.

In return they will be able to offer customers Colonial State Bank's

range of financial services including insurance, investment and funds management as well as traditional banking products, and will earn between A\$80,000 and A\$200,000 a year based on their ability to achieve certain performance criteria.

Mr Smedley said people applying to become franchisees included retailers, accountants, financial planners and Colonial's own staff. Priority would be given to the bank's existing employees.

The franchise plan represents a significant shift in focus for Colonial

State bank, which is set to close about 200 of its 300 traditional branches in Australia over the next few months, in order to replace them with franchised outlets. Stuart James, Colonial State Bank's managing director, has said that the bank will retain responsibility for maintaining credit standards and approving loans. Colonial will continue to be the financial product manufacturer and the quality controller, with distribution in the hands of "highly motivated small-business people," he said.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Oxford seeks £30m for acquisitions

OXFORD MOLECULAR is raising £30.4 million through a rights issue to fund the acquisitions of two computer software businesses in America and to provide working capital. Oxford, which supplies drug design software and contract research services, also unveiled a collaborative agreement with Astra, the Swedish pharmaceuticals company, to develop desktop software for research scientists. Oxford is paying an initial \$22.5 million cash for Genetics Computer Group and the software arm of MLR Automation. A further profit-related sum of up to \$1.5 million may become due.

The pact with Astra will last a year and will aim to develop an integrated suite of software tools that can be used to define, store, retrieve and analyse data. Oxford reported 1996 pre-tax losses of £1.85 million (£3.7 million) on sales of £9.79 million (£6.2 million). Losses were 3.3p a share (7.2p loss). Again there is no dividend. The underwritten rights issue is on a one-for-seven basis at 360p a share. Existing shares fell 1p to 407½p.

Mirror Group positive

MIRROR GROUP, the newspaper group that publishes The Mirror and Sunday Mirror, said that it had made a "positive" start to 1997. Sir Robert Clark, chairman, speaking at the company's annual meeting, said he was confident that the rest of the year would turn out to be "satisfactory". On current trading, Sir Robert said that advertising revenue is picking up again after a quiet period before the general election, and the outlook for the remainder of the year was "encouraging". The shares rose 3½p to 213½p.

Employment worries

MANY small companies are still finding employment regulations a major problem, according to a legal helpline. About 43 per cent of the 17,000 queries handled by the Federation of Small Businesses legal assistance helpline in the first quarter were over employment matters. Bill Knox, the FSB's employment affairs chairman, said the results showed employers were finding it tough in the aftermath of a recession. Queries about the working time directive, health and safety regulations and statutory sick pay also featured heavily.

Cadbury's solid start

CADBURY SCHWEPPE, the confectionery and soft drinks group, has made a solid start to 1997. Dominic Cadbury, chairman, said at the annual meeting yesterday. But he also gave warning that the strong pound would have "an adverse impact" on this year's results. The group completed the sale of its 51 per cent stake in Coca-Cola-Schweppes Bottlers to Coca-Cola in February for £623 million. It also bought Bim Bim, Egypt's leading confectionery company for an undisclosed sum. The shares rose 7p to 529p.

Promotion for Tague

STOREHOUSE, the retail group, has appointed Stephen Tague, stores operations director as Bhs, as managing director of the chain. Mr Tague, 42, joined Bhs in January 1994. He previously worked for Debenhams and Alders. He will be responsible for Bhs UK operations, one of the jobs previously done by Keith Edelman, the chief executive of Storehouse who remains executive chairman of Bhs. Mr Edelman said: "Stephen will play a key operational role, enabling me to concentrate on longer term strategic issues."

US deal for VAH

VISUAL ACTION HOLDINGS has agreed to sell its film services division to Panavision, the US designer and manufacturer of film camera systems, for £38 million. The division, which earned £3.95 million before tax in 1996, hires out film cameras and associated equipment for the production of commercials, TV drama and films. VAH will invest the proceeds in continuing businesses, comprising the hire of audio-visual equipment for corporate presentations and product launches, and broadcast video.

Irish inflation subdued

INFLATION in the Republic of Ireland remained subdued in April with only a 0.1 per cent rise over the previous month, according to the Central Statistics Office. Over 11 months from May last year the consumer price index rose 1.4 per cent, down slightly on the previous 11-month period. Meanwhile, the First National Building Society yesterday became the latest institution to increase its interest rates by half a percentage point after last week's interest rate rise by the Irish Central Bank.

BHP to raise A\$636m

THE Broken Hill Pty Co (BHP), Australia's largest company, is raising up to A\$636 million (£318 million) from a non-renounceable issue of ordinary shares. The share issue will provide eligible shareholders with the opportunity to purchase additional small parcels of shares up to a maximum value of A\$2,400 per shareholder. The issue follows BHP's decision last year to halve the company's dividend reinvestment and bonus share schemes. BHP has the largest market capitalisation on the Australian stock exchange of A\$35.43 billion.

Rentokil disposal

RENTOKIL INITIAL, the business services company, is selling the large cranes of Grayston White and Sparrow, a former BET subsidiary, to Sarens of Belgium for £8 million. It was announced yesterday. The agreement includes the sale of four large cranes and the transfer of 25 operating personnel. The business has a turnover of £4 million and net tangible assets of £6 million. The disposal will give rise to a profit of £600,000, Rentokil said.

RELIEVE

...BECAUSE WITH DIRECT DEBIT BILLS CAN BE SPREAD AND IF AN AMOUNT OR DATE OF A DD SHOULD EVER CHANGE, YOU'LL BE NOTIFIED WELL IN ADVANCE.

UK BANKS AND BUILDING SOCIETIES

DIRECT Debit

DD YOUR DOUGH

THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INC.

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THEATRE

In Stratford the RSC doesn't quite rise to the bloodthirsty mood of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*



OPERA

The Brighton Festival strikes pure dross with a staging of von Einem's *Danton's Death*

THE TIMES ARTS



DANCE

Choreography lets the side down in Aletta Collins's otherwise fine adaptation of *Three Sisters*



MUSIC

Simon Rattle goes into spring mode, even if the weather doesn't, in Birmingham

First to cry for revenge

The end of *Hamlet* sees four corpses left on stage and four off. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, which was written two decades earlier and can claim to be its most important precursor, outmatches its body-count. Three characters are in various states of decay in the wings. Six are waiting to be carried off by the morticians. The tongue that the protagonist has bitten off before stabbing himself to death lies centre-stage, like some strawberry jelly bean. And the ghost of yet another unfortunate sits cackling with glee at what has been a good day for the revenge industry.

With a little help from Seneca, Kyd invented that most popular of Elizabethan genres: the revenge tragedy. Indeed, there is good reason to suppose that in the 1580s he wrote the lost play known as *Ur-Hamlet* and widely agreed to be Shakespeare's prime source for his own treatment of the Elsinore story. Certainly, all contemporary directors of *Hamlet* itself should be forced to spend an evening reading Kyd. The experience would doubtless remind them of how much subtlety Shakespeare brought to revenge drama; but, more importantly, it might show them that our ancestors felt vengeance with a visceral intensity that modern English actors and actresses have mislaid.

It would be impossible to stage *The Spanish Tragedy* quite as gruesomely as *Hamlet* is regularly staged. It is too blunt, crude and direct. What is the Spanish nobleman Don Andrea's posthumous reaction to the Portuguese prince, Baltazar, who has killed him in battle? Why, to return to Earth and team up with a character called Revenge, who in Michael Boyd's production is sometimes a hooded grey figure, sometimes an offstage voice, sometimes a half-mad

The Spanish Tragedy

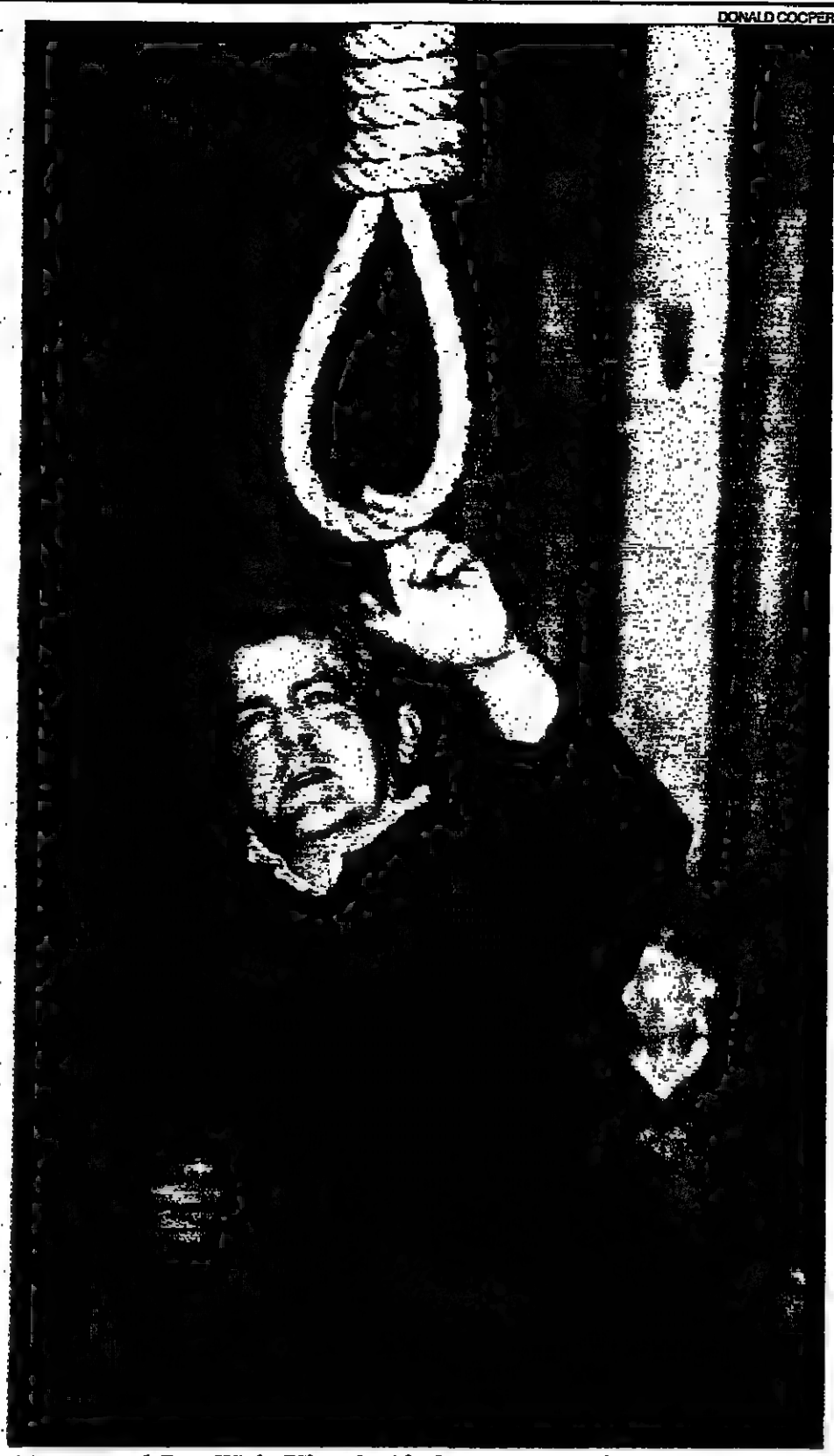
Swan, Stratford

babble echoing from the distance.

And what does Baltazar do when he discovers that the woman he fancies, Bel-Imperia, loves one Horatio? To hiss "I must take revenge or die myself" and, in cabaret with the princeling, Lorenzo, to hang and disembowel his rival. And does Horatio's father, Hieronimo, take a resigned view of the matter? That is a silly question, for this is a world where the good avenger does not just kill his enemies. He pursues them to Hell and ensures they are "dragged through boiling Acheron and live dying still in endless flames".

Is it impossible for a director nowadays to do full justice to an author who sees anger and evil as two active forces, ferociously interlocked for eternity? Are revivals of his work likely to leave us feeling more kidded than Kydded? I fear so. There is much that is admirable in Boyd's production: He resists the temptation to send up the play's sensations. He stages the proceedings with tough clarity on a stage that mostly stays bare. He gets decent performances from Robert Glenister, whose villainous elan of the moulted suits, Lorenzo, and Stephen Redmond, a shattered, bewildered Bel-Imperia, and (especially) Patrice Naiambana, whose Andrea is to be found prowling the stage in furious frustration when he is not helpfully hammering at it.

Yet something — total belief in the characters' grim obsessions? — still proves elusive. The problem is epitomised by



At a noose end: Peter Wight (Hieronimo) in the RSC staging of *The Spanish Tragedy*

Peter Wight's Hieronimo, who prefigures Hamlet by contemplating suicide and running a bit mad but needs also to be possessed by a vindictive monomania alien to the Dane. Wight makes the interesting choice of playing the character

as a bereft bumbler out of his depth: Polonius as hitman. It does not meet the emotional occasion. Nor, quite, does the production.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Case for the guillotine

OPERA

Danton's Death

Dome, Brighton

ANY regional festival brave enough to mount the British premiere of a 50-year-old opera by an Austrian composer who is barely a household name in his own household deserves success. But as I escaped at the end of Gottfried von Einem's French Revolution opera *Danton's Death* with a heartfelt cry of "liberté!", I felt only sadness that the Brighton Festival had struck pure dross. This is *Les Mis* without the tunes — or, for that matter, the plot, the characterisation or the emotional depth.

What a pity. Von Einem is one of the good guys of 20th-century musical history: a political liberal imprisoned by the Nazis, but a musical conservative with a style hovering somewhere between Strauss and Berg. For von Einem, Georg Büchner's great drama *Dantons Tod* — a chilling portrait of moderation crushed and bloodthirsty rampant during Robespierre's Reign of Terror — would have held special significance.

But when he came to set it to music he put all the passion into the orchestral writing: a score rich in nagging rhythms, baleful brass outbursts, ominous bass paniers and eerie counterpoints, admirably delivered here by the Flanders Symphony Orchestra under David Angus's cogent direction. To the singers, regrettably, he gave all too little of substance.

The text (newly translated by Amanda Holden) gabbles on about power, corruption and revolution, yet no solo seems to be extended more than a few seconds. At the beginning, at least, exchanges are woefully sketchy. The execution itself is a hopeless anticlimax. Only at the end of each act — when Lucile, the wife of Danton's comrade

Camille Desmoulins, goes melodiously bonkers — does von Einem work up any sort of dramatic momentum.

Whether a production more focused than John Lloyd Davies's for New Sussex Opera would have given Danton a fighting chance of life before death is debatable. The early scenes (coquettish prostitutes in brothel; mob being beastly to itself) looked like a fancy-dress party in an advertising agency. Then, for Danton's trial, Davies switched to the sort of frenetic lighting-plot last seen in Dagenham discos in the late Seventies.

All very distracting for the singers. Even so, Alan Oke's powerful Camille, Alison Roddy's Lucile and Andrew Slater's Danton impressed. But the NSO Chorus should have been twice as large and more than twice as accurate. All in all, an evening which made one feel that the guillotine had its merits.

RICHARD MORRISON

Brightening up the season

CONCERT

CBSO/Rattle

Birmingham

FOR anyone travelling to Symphony Hall through an early-evening blizzard Sir Simon Rattle's celebration of spring — Delius's *First Cuckoo*, Schumann's and Britten's *Spring Symphonies* — must have seemed sadly out of place. After the concert, with the jubilant sound of Britten's finale fresh in the mind, it was definitely the weather that was out of place.

As a symphony, Britten's settings of 13 texts from as many different sources do not add up. But there are some masterful things here, like the drizzling *Waters Above*, and the star-lit *Out on the Lawn*. *Lie in Bed*; and there is the finale where Britten distinguishes everything on an undistinguished waltz tune and an unfortunate cowhorn and intonates with it.

It depends on how it is done, of course. Although all three

solists — Joan Rodgers, Catherine Robbin and Ian Bostridge — had sung freely and cheerfully in *Spring*, the *Sweet Spring*, and although the mezzo was particularly eloquent in the Auden setting, they were not always at ease with each other. But the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Youth Chorus had been exceptionally well prepared and it was they, encouraged by Rattle's supreme last effort, who finally lifted the performance onto the ecstatic level which the work must attain if it is to survive.

Why the conductor modified Schumann's string scoring at

the beginning of the Largetto of his First Symphony it is impossible to imagine. While the first violins might well have got a warmer sound out of the melodic line by concentrating their efforts on the G-string, rather than dividing into octaves, that is not what is required of them. When a conductor and orchestra can treat Schumann's scoring as effectively as Simon Rattle and the CBSO did elsewhere in the work, it seems a pity not to shed the same kind of illumination on all of it.

As for the *First Cuckoo* in *Spring*, it seemed a little lost in Symphony Hall where, in spite of some seductive woodwind sounds the colours somehow failed to blend into the gently protective atmosphere it needs for the projection of its poetic message.

GERALD LARNER

DANCE: Aletta Collins and Laurie Booth at the Spring Loaded festival

Looking good, saying little

Aletta Collins has a long list of theatrical credits to her name. In addition to her own dance productions over the years, she has choreographed and co-directed *Un Ballo in Maschera* for Munich; did the same with Birtwistle's *The Second Mrs Kong* for Glyndebourne; and choreographed the current West End production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. One thing all this has taught her is how to stage a good show.

Her dance adaptation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (at the Place Theatre) is craftily arranged. With a cast of four, and a simple set at her disposal — tree, wall, window and chair are all that Tom Cairns needs to suggest the sisters' stifling domestic environment — Collins is able to encompass the general ennui of Chekhov's frustrated heroines and the inexorable of their ever-narrowing horizons. The choice of music is

apposite and witty. The Sister Sledge hit *We Are Family* cheekily introduces our three miserable siblings, dressed in shapeless cardigans and sensible shoes, listlessly offering their thumbs in the hope that some passing motorist will whisk them away to Moscow. The use of Tchaikovsky's nostalgic piano music could be a smiling reference to MacMillan's Chekhovian *Winter Dreams* for Covent Garden.

But staging isn't everything when it comes to dance. And choreography is often overlooked in the challenge to be theatrical. Collins tries to suggest the uncertainty and malaise that incapacitates the sisters in the choreography (for herself, Bernadette Iglich and Rachel Krichke). But her movements lack a richness of personality, that ability to elaborate on basic emotional impulses. A low-brow humour elicits odd laughs (fine performance here by the lone male,

Dan O'Neill), but the production never makes up its mind which way it wants to go.

One thing you can say for Laurie Booth. When it comes to collaborators, he sure knows how to pick them. Both of his Spring Loaded pieces (at the Queen Elizabeth Hall) had the advantage of compelling aural and visual personalities. Which made it all the more annoying that so little of consequence was happening within these atmospheric landscapes.

The programme opener, *Stormgarden*, featured a thrilling and systematic soundscape by Hans Peter Kuhn, a frequent Booth collaborator. Its clangs, bumbles, rumbles and roars added up to an impressive collection of elemental cries and whispers. Paul Burwell's sleek set design practically reverberated with the gusts of wind generated by the small fans.

Booth's movement language for himself and Gary Lambert was characteristically loose-limbed and well-oiled, the body winding and unwinding like a corkscrew. But how irritating to watch choreography that was so concerned with busy limbs and exercising joints.

ACT/ual f/ACT/ual boasted sound from Scanner (aka Robin Rimbaud), a "telephone terrorist" who uses snatches of mobile phone conversations in his aural collages. This score, though, contained only the briefest of phone talk, it bulged with cobbled-together melodies of many musical hues. Here the body definition of the three dancers — Booth, Lambert and Shelly Baker — carried a wilder, wider and more spontaneous message than *Stormgarden*, meatier in its muscularity and more seductively physical to watch.

DEBRA CRAINE

Britain tunes in to Europe

RADIO

means having a sense of humour to the same extent that the Dutch have. Mountains may be a little unfair. One doubts that any British museum would have the wit to send for John Major's spectacles.

David Sells presented the programme. Indeed, contrary to the views of complainants about too much Americana, Sells has done many good documentaries on radio about various aspects of European political life.

The use of Bismarck in the title refers to the fact that if Kohl wins the German general election next year, he could

outstrip Bismarck (19 years) as the longest-serving German Chancellor. Sells deftly illustrated Kohl's twin images: as the unifier who sees a European federation as banishing forever the risk of war and, conversely, as the obsessive patriot imposing German power on the rest of the Continent.

Sells is a journalist who describes the landscape rather than trying to persuade us of its merits and flaws. Therefore, the listener was left to decide which of these Kohls is the real one. Perhaps the answer is both. The programme demonstrated that Kohl is a man of charm and cunning, the deadliest combination known to politics.

Wherever Blair is taking us at Amsterdam and beyond, we need more programmes like this ahead of any future referendum on Europe. Meanderings along the Mississippi are all well and good, but the murky waters of the Rhine, the Danube and the Seine are where radio needs to shine its light now. Let us hope enough listeners gather on the banks.

PETER BARNARD

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
A FEW GOOD MEN, WHEN HARRY MET SALLY & MISERY

ALEC BALDWIN WHOOP! GOLDBERG JAMES WOODS

NOMINATED
2 ACADEMY
AWARDS

A Forgotten Crime.
An Impossible Case.
A Final Chance For Justice.

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POP 1
The Big Bang spirit of Nirvana lives on in the new album from Foo Fighters



POP 2
... while Robert Cray offers more of his meticulously organised blues on Sweet Potato Pie



POP 3
The spiciest thing from Sunderland? Upwardly mobile Kenickie flex their girl-power



POP 4
It really is one-derful, says Caitlin Moran in defence of the BBC's pop station

Ten million reasons to love your Radio 1

The wonderful one's audience may have halved, but it is changing the face of pop. So be glad to be British

One of the most horrifying collections of syllables in the English language must be "market forces". Dumb, brutal, and slick with the greases of greed, market forces would have us believe that libraries, parks, public swimming baths, art galleries, museums and music are self-indulgent luxuries, while nuclear weaponry is something to be encouraged. Which is why the touting column inches devoted to Radio 1's "decline" are so disappointing.

From its 1970s peak of 20 million listeners, when "characters" such as the Hairy Cornflake (Dave Lee Travis) and the Bearded Fish Peddler (Noel Edmonds) told jokes that a budget could have scripted, the rebranded Radio 1 now pulls in a mere 10.2 million. Market forces, it would seem, do not go a bundle on the sounds of the underground, and DJs who know about music and refuse to talk down to their audience. The ten million drop-off is somehow seen as a massive failure, as though success can only be measured in numbers.

It's easy to engage market forces if you are willing to disengage three-quarters of your brain. Simply play a mixture of the tried-and-tested and the 1990s equivalent of easy listening — Celine Dion, Michael Bolton, Peter Andre, Boyzone. Get in a boyish DJ to make obvious, laboured quips about the Royal Family, the Spice Girls and "Whacko Jacko". Radio 1 pursued this broadcasting direction for much of the 1980s, foisting on us the dinking whimsy of Steve Wright and his gargling "posse" and the living horror of Jakki Brambles, who

seemed to believe that being into Living In A Box but also having a Smiths album made her a talent pusher on a par with John Peel.

But with the loosening up of broadcasting licences in the late 1980s, Radio 1 started losing listeners hand over fist to stations offering big cash prizes and "shock jocks", so named because they were



CAITLIN MORAN

talking jock straps. Radio 1 had to find a new audience, and at the beginning of the 1990s the only audience that wasn't being catered for was the under-25s. As Radio 1's remit is to educate, inform and play cool music for hipsters in Nikes and dreads, it finally shook off the MOR horror of the 1980s. Along with the shakeup of *Top of the Pops*, it was one of the best things to happen to music since Bob Dylan plugged into the mains.

The fact that Britain is currently undergoing a musical renaissance is almost entirely due to the BBC. As a public broadcasting service, only Radio 1 is in a position to ignore the strangling fiscal considerations of market forces. Placebo, the Chemical Brothers, Prodigy, Manic Street Preachers, Suede, DJ Shadow and Pulp are all now

big stars influencing the mainstream — remember when Phil Collins vowed that his next album would be "very Oasis"? — would never have gotten airplay anywhere else; and their success can only be to the betterment of British industry.

Music is, after all, our third biggest export, and those timid, lukewarm playlists of the 1980s meant that our artists were drawing on an ever-shrinking, stagnant pool of influences. Now, of course, we are in the exciting position of having a forthcoming generation of artists who are all post-drum and bass, trance, lo-fi and hip hop, and who will combine all of these to invent new and juicy music for the year 2000.

Because it is so difficult to put a value and a worth to some things — and because we are all so obsessed with putting value and worth on things — market forces are seen as the most valid indicators of success. But market forces are only an accurate yardstick for a limited number of commodities. No City analyst would say there was a "need" for a moderately successful public broadcasting service playing electrifying new music to a fairly limited audience. But then, why would anyone care what a City analyst had to say about music?

In ways that many business executives — and journalists — would never understand, *Melody Maker* and Radio 1 are far more important than the *Financial Times*. Like Eddie Izzard, the clockwork radio, Amnesty International and *Private Eye*, the BBC is still something that should make us proud to be British.



Foo Fighters: The Colour and the Shape is stiff with songs that start off quietly and then explode into life like greyhounds out of the traps

Halfway to paradise

POP ALBUMS: Dave Grohl's latest attempt to lay the ghost of Nirvana almost comes off, says David Sinclair

FOO FIGHTERS
The Colour and the Shape (Capitol CDEST 2295 £13.99)
ALTHOUGH he has emerged from the Nirvana nightmare in surprisingly good shape, drummer turned singer and guitarist Dave Grohl seems to have become inextricably wedded to the Big Bang method of songwriting as a result. *The Colour and the Shape*, Foo Fighters' second album, is stiff with songs that start off quietly and then explode into life like greyhounds out of the traps. This practice even extends to the running order of the album, which is prefaced with a brief quiet track, *Doll*, followed immediately by the explosive *Monkey Wrench*, a low-rent pastiche of the Ramones.

But when he avoids this cliché, as on the slow build and epic sweep of *My Hero* or the affecting acoustic ballad *Walking After You*, Grohl shows himself capable of more than just cruising on his reputation as one of the hardest hitters in modern rock.

It is a tall order these days for any American band to make big guitars and a traditional belting beat sound like anything other than an old-fashioned hangover from grunge, but Grohl has plenty of tantalisingly good ideas to offer, as he demonstrates on numbers ranging from the delicious *Wind Up* to the dreamy *February Stars*. Which makes *The Colour and the Shape* doubly disappointing — given a slightly fresher spin, it could have been great.

KENICKIE
At the Club (Enimisc 7243 8 56147 £12.49)
NOT holding back in any department are Kenickie from Sunderland, the latest gang of teenage girls with attitude to launch an assault on the nation's charts and an older generation's nerves.

Pitching their stall somewhere between the confrontational angst of Courtney Love's Hole ("Now her kisses full at first/ache like blisters waiting to get burst") and the cartoon silliness of Shampoo ("We dress cheap/We dress tacky/We dance for thrills"),

Kenickie sweep through a raft of traditional sounding punk-pop anthems on their debut album like a crowd of rowdy schoolgirls gatecrashing a pensioners' social.

There are some ear-catching moments, especially *Robot Song*, with its oddly automated rhythm track and sad, existentialist lyrics. But as happens so often with this kind of exercise, the album's initial

shine is gradually worn away by the glaring lack of depth and variety.

ROBERT CRAY
Sweet Potato Pie (Mercury 534 698 £13.99)
THERE is a tendency for even the greatest blues artists to become, at a certain stage in their careers, rather nonchalant about their recording commitments. But with more

than 20 years on the road and ten albums under his belt, this has not yet happened to Robert Cray.

Sweet Potato Pie is another meticulously organised collection of songs, mostly written by Cray, which ooze elegance and poise: from the brooding, slow blues of *Back Home* to the barnstorming finale of *I Can't Quit*. The Memphis Horns — absent from his last album, *Some Rainy Morning* — are reinstated, adding a zesty touch to Cray's soulful vocals and ultra-dry guitar sound, especially with the lovely cascading motif at the end of *Simple Things*.

What Cray has lost, over the years, is the element of surprise, and the familiarity of his urbane touch now tends to obscure the marvellous depth of his talent. Let's hope he does not have to wait until he is in his seventies before his genius is rediscovered by the three million or so people who have bought *Strong Persuader* since it was released in 1986.

TOP TEN ALBUMS

- 1 (3) Spice Girls (Virgin)
- 2 (1) Tellin' Stories (Beggars Banquet)
- 3 (4) White on Blonde (Island)
- 4 (2) In It for the Money (Supergoose)
- 5 (15) Republica (Parlophone)
- 6 (7) Flaming Pie (Parlophone)
- 7 (8) Shearer (Polygram)
- 8 (11) Pop (Island)
- 9 (13) Travelling Without Moving (Jemini)
- 10 (9) Ocean Drive (Wild Card)

abc

The new single *Skyscraping* — out now

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From the album *Skyscraping*.

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BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS

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THEY have been around since 1980, but Big Head Todd & the Monsters are still likely to surprise anyone who takes their rather daunting name at face value. The trio from Boulder, Colorado, has fashioned an educated, blue-rinsed rock sound which, on gentler numbers such as *Please Don't Tell Her* and the title track of their fifth album, *Beautiful World*, echoes the plaintive appeal of Eric Clapton's more melodically adept work in the 1970s.

Produced by Jerry Harrison, formerly of Talking Heads, the album boasts a sublimely romantic feel. Singer and songwriter Todd Park Mohr keeps his voice in tune and his guitar sound unfailingly clean, but there is plenty of muscle in the romping rhythm of *Resignation Superman* and the sure-footed soloing of *Crazy Mary*.

The only incongruous note is struck by a version of John Lee Hooker's standard *Boom Boom*, featuring Hooker himself on vocals. The band rip into it with deceptively casual ease and the number soon grows wings it never had before. It is a great performance, but leaves the unsettling impression that they may have been holding back on the throttle a little too carefully on the rest of the album.

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E	M				O	R	MONARCH
S					E	D	PERFUMED

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MENSA

A MEETING OF MINDS

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POP 5

Madonna is a convert to the high-tech world of the remix producer...



POP 6

...and even the new album from Michael Jackson will dance to the computer's tune

THE ARTS



TOMORROW

How does Alex Jennings rate as the RSC's new Hamlet? Read Benedict Nightingale's view



TOMORROW

Pavarotti in recital, and the other big weekend shows, are listed in The Directory

Mixtures as never before

Michael Jackson and Madonna know that if you want to get a hit, get a dance remix. Paul Sexton reports

Offering from creative block? Going through a commercial slump? Image crisis bothering you? You need the new superhero of the record industry. Simply open your wallet and send for Remix-Man. He can remake tender ballads into 128 beats-per-minute thumpers at a single bound and get the audience dancing happily around their head-bags. He can turn a sensitive singer-songwriter into such a denizen of dancehall that their own mother wouldn't recognise them.

Club version, dub style, urban groove, R&B mix, instrumental version, radio edit: you name it, he'll morph it, and it's odds-on your record will be more marketable as a result. It might not be a song anymore, but never mind the melody, feel the bpm.

Next Wednesday Michael Jackson will invade every record store in the world with a new album to tie in with his concert tour, which hits Britain on July 9. But closer inspection of *Blood on the Dance Floor: HIStory in the Mix* reveals it not to be a freshly formed piece of work in the conventional sense. Only five of its 13 pieces are new songs; the other eight are tracks first heard on 1995's *HIStory: Past, Present and Future*, among them such benign ballads as *You Are Not Alone* and *Stranger in Moscow*, remodelled by the studio technicians who have become part of the new power elite in pop.

The sonic scientists behind this "new" product include such pre-eminent talents as Todd Terry, Frankie Knuckles

and David Morales and newer names such as Tony Moran, a 32-year-old New Yorker who says that he is employed for one reason only. "They don't give me any directions, they just say 'make it a hit'."

Labels thus spend vast sums altering the music they have already paid a record producer vast sums to supervise in

Remix Man can turn tender ballads into 128 bpm thumpers

the first place. Not that the mixes themselves need be costly to complete anymore, Moran says. "All you need is a computer. The programs to sequence the songs on aren't expensive either. The Buckheads' record *The Bomb*, a huge 1995 hit fashioned out of bits of an old record by Chicago, is almost a pure, scruple from beginning to end, a record that could be made for \$50."

The remix industry grew from the simple 1970s notion that some music might become more danceable with a little studio post-production. In those days of discotheques and mirrorballs there was the seven-inch version for radio, the 12-inch version for the clubs, and that was your lot. Then dance culture infiltrated

every corner of the music business, and the industry discovered just what a magic marketing wand the remix could be. So it was that the knob-twiddlers and mouse-clickers moved in on Madonna's interpretation of *Don't Cry For Me Argentina* from the soundtrack of *Evita*. In perhaps the club genre's most gruesome piece of larceny to date, the familiar ballad was dragged kicking and screaming on to the dancefloor, and the perfect crime was completed when clubgoers tapped up the remixes and substantially enhanced the song's chart performance, taking it past 200,000 sales in the UK.

By such mysterious means can entire careers be refuelled. Suzanne Vega was just another sensitive singer-songwriter before the English duo DNA got their hands on her a cappella *Ton's Diner* in 1990, took it to the bright lights of clubland and introduced Vega, temporarily at least, to the youngest and funkiest audience she had ever known.

In January Tori Amos's single *Professional Widow* was repromoted with remixes by DJ Armand Van Helden, who stripped it down, remade it, unrecognisably around a meaningless vocal line, and gave a No 1 hit to an artist whose songs had never got within a country mile of a dancefloor before.

For an old-fashioned songwriter like Paddy McAloon of Prefab Sprout, it is a perplexing business. "It's an odd creative process stuck on top of what you thought was going to be the final creative process,"



Michael Jackson's new album *Blood on the Dance Floor* contains only five new songs — and eight remixes of songs from his last album

he says. "Here you are as the 'creator', and what you've done has been handed on to somebody else."

"Future Sound Of London had some kind of club hit with a song of ours, *You Don't Love Me*, that owed nothing to the original. It was great, but it was nothing to do with me."

Kenny "Dope" Gonzalez is half of Masters At Work, responsible for the Bucketheads hit and known as one of the most powerful of remix teams, with clients including Madonna and Jackson. He and partner Louie Vega have recently curtailed that lucrative line of work to develop their own vibrant R&B/jazz collective, Nuuyorican Soul.

Now, ironically, the poachers have turned gamekeepers and Gonzalez says the duo have blocked record company attempts to restyle their work. "They wanted to do remixes on our stuff, but we're like: 'No, we don't want people to perceive it as something it's not.'"

With many radio programmers nervous of supporting

ballads, airplay can also loosen record company budgets to finance upbeat mixes. Toni Braxton's *Unbreak My Heart* may have been a romantic power ballad through and through, but when a beat-filled version was made available, radio lapped it up and helped the song to a four-month stay in our charts.

And if the enforced jollity of that mix was hard for easy-listeners to take, one wonders what they will make of Moran's "extended club mix" of *I'd Really Love to See You Tonight*, a lovely mid-1970s ballad by England Dan and John Ford Coley and now a floor-filling single by, wait for it, Barry Manilow.

"I've only got the best response to that," Moran says. "When you see him live, singing the song as a dance record, everyone gets up. His audience is from 25 to 75 and you see them all shaking whatever they have to shake."

Michael Jackson's *Blood on the Dance Floor: HIStory in the Mix* is released on Wednesday by Epic

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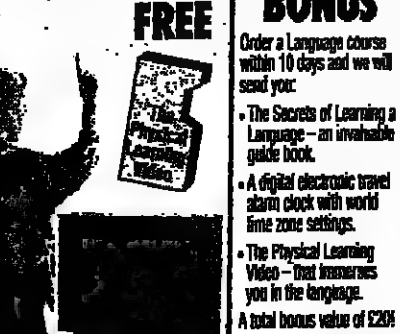
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YMS/97

All the old dude

THESE days, Ian Hunter (at the Waterfront, Norwich) is almost as famous for his literary efforts as for his music. When his *Diary of a Rock'n'Roll Star*, first published in 1974, was recently reissued, it was hailed as one of the best ever books about rock. His wryish account of life on the road with his band, Mott the Hoople, established him as pop's Alan Clark.

What is most striking about the book, though, is how little it says about the performances, and how much is devoted to the business of killing time and complaining of the inadequacies of promot-

CONCERT

ers, caterers and rock journalists. Yet it was the live shows that really forged Mott's reputation in their heyday. Fortunately, Hunter's current tour manages to recall some of that old energy without recourse to excessive nostalgia.

He may now be the wrong side of 50, but he still retains the halo of curly hair, the large shades and the plaintive, coarse-edged voice. He also remains committed to the Dylanesque ballad and the bar-room boogie. He opens with *Once Bitten Twice Shy*, a hit from his string of solo albums of the late 1970s. He gives a blistering rendition of *All the Way From Memphis* and a passionate version of *I Wish I Was Your Mother*, both from one of Mott's last records. He encores with a strangely stately version of *All the Young Dudes*, the song David Bowie wrote for Mott.

Hunter is not content, however, just to recycle the past. He has a new album to promote, *The Artful Dodger*, and from it comes the melancholic *Now is the Time*, the gospel-inflected *Something To Believe In* and the cockney rock of *23a, Swan Hill*. All of them are fine songs, well served by his five-piece band. Hunter may be destined to remain in a pop twilight, but he continues to offer pleasures that bear comparison with those provided by such currently fashionable acts as Wilco.

JOHN STREET

"Flaming Pie is his strongest solo work for years" *The Times*
"The sound of a pop genius" *Q*

FLAMING PIE



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His **FIRST** studio album in 4 YEARS
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THE TIMES ARTS

CHOICE 1

Marcel Marceau's alter ego, the white-faced Bip, is 50 years old

VENUE: Tonight at the Festival Hall

CHOICE 2

Felicity Kendal is Madame Arkadina in a new version of *The Seagull*

VENUE: Opens tonight at the Old Vic

NEW VIDEOS

Nasty piece of work Picasso is egotist, womaniser and boor in James Ivory's film, *Surviving Picasso*

NEW CDS

Maria Callas is in fine voice in a new compilation inspired by the West End play, *Master Class*

Not such a pretty picture

NEW ON VIDEO

SURVIVING PICASSO
Warner, 15, 1996
ANTHONY HOPKINS looks more like Picasso than you might expect, but we never meet the towering artist of the 20th century. This is a film about Picasso the egotist, the womaniser and boor, seen through his years with Francoise Gilot (played by screen newcomer Nastassja Kinski). James Ivory's direction is more animated than usual. But the sheer nastiness of the central character wrecks havoc; you want to escape this man's company. Available to rent.

THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN
Warner Terror Vision, 15, 1957
JUST when British cinema was ready to die of anæmia, along came Hammer with human organs gleaming brightly, blood smeared around like tomato sauce, and Christopher Lee staggering about in bandages. Critics talked about "disgusting carnality", though Terence Fisher's movie, the first in Hammer's cycle, looks fairly timid today. Peter Cushing is in good form as the Baron who is, in his wife's innocent words, "locked in his laboratory for hours on end".

IN A YEAR OF 13 MOONS
Connoisseur, 18, 1978
INSPIRED by the suicide of Fassbinder's ex-lover, this extraordinary film follows the fortunes of Ervin (Volker Spengler), who becomes Elvira after a sex-change operation, but finds fulfillment in neither gender. Fassbinder marshals the techniques of vintage Hollywood melodramas only to aim them at the feelings and places that Hollywood ignored. This is a world of cold, unfriendly urban corners, of garish bars and empty



Anthony Hopkins as Picasso in a film focusing on the egotism and sheer nastiness of the central character

business offices; a film darkly humorous, often unsettling, and surprisingly tender.

THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU
Entertainment, 12, 1995
WHAT other film offers the sight of Marion Brando caked in make-up, waving limply, and carried aloft through a crowd of half-human beasts on what looks like a customised Popenobile? When Brando's crazed doctor is on parade, you can enjoy this

adaptation of H.G. Wells's tale as a camp entertainment. Once he's absent, the film becomes far more nasty than silly. The director is John Frankenheimer. Available to rent.

and reality. But the camera keeps quiet, observing rural people playing in a film set in an area devastated by the 1990 earthquake. A bricklayer is cast as the husband of a girl whose grandmother, in real life, had refused his offer of marriage. During repeated takes, he waxes the lady once more. Love never dies; nor, despite earthquakes, does the Iranian spirit. Touching and uplifting.

GEOFF BROWN

NEW CLASSICAL CDS: Nordic chastity; a Callas compilation; a classy German clarinetist

ORCHESTRAL

Barry Millington

STENHAMMAR
Symphony No 2: Excellent! Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Sundkvist. Naxos 8.553888-4. £4.99
The Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927) once told Carl Nielsen that what he admired about the latter's work was his "Nordic chastity". If that makes Stenhammar sound ascetic, his music proclaims the opposite. His Second Symphony is easy-going, lyrical in melodic invention and only just short of voluptuous in harmony. It does have characteristic Nordic features, however, notably in the folk-dance contours of the first movement and Scherzo.

OPERA

John Higgins

and under his compatriot Pether Sundkvist the Royal Scottish National Orchestra makes a convincingly sympathetic job of it. The coupling, Stenhammar's upward-striving symphonic overture *Excelsion*, is the same as that on Neeme Järvi's recording for BIS. Both the latter and Järvi's remake for DG are strong full-price recommendations, but once again Naxos has come up with a very acceptable budget alternative.

MASTER CLASS

Maria Callas

EMI CDC 5 5641 2-4. £12.99
EMI's latest Callas compilation is "inspired by the West End play", Terence McNally's *Master Class* at the Queen's. McNally in turn was inspired by her records, including those of her teaching at the Juilliard in 1971 and 1972.

BOULEZ, STRAVINSKY

Edvard Brunner

THEIR releases are few and far between, their designs a characteristically austere, designer monochrome. But from out of EMI's distinctive CDs, matching rare repertoire with rare artistry, a kaleidoscope of musical colour invariably bursts forth, and its latest releases are no exception. The German clarinetist, Eduard

DAI NIENTE

Edvard Brunner

presented a generous and highly imaginative 70-minute recital: its title, *Dai niente*, is taken from a piece written for him by Helmut Lachenmann in which breath turns to sound and back again in a mesmerising 15 minutes of virtuoso vanishing tricks. Stravinsky's *Three Pieces* lead to the tiny five measures he wrote to Picasso on a greetings telegram. Then Boulez's *Domus* of 1925 in which six teasing sketches are answered by six "microtraces": the soloist can vary sequence and dynamics at will. Brunner separates the pieces widely, exaggerating the role of chance. It's also well worth seeking out violinist Michelle Makarski's disc, *Cocteau* (ECM 1587 449 957-2) in which the spongy Celtic lament or "Joaze" is turned and turned about by American composer Stephen Hartke in the revealing company of a Baroque Passacaglia by Biber, a Chaconne by Reger, and more besides.

LONDON

FORTUNE COOKIES In the build-up to the handover of Hong Kong on June 30, a selection of provocative and radical performances and installations on being Chinese" begins today and runs until June 8. Sheng Qi, a visual and performance artist from Hong Kong, performs *Universal Brand* (8pm). Children in the Nash Room (tonight and tomorrow 8pm). In *A Life of Living Together* (tonight and tomorrow 8pm), Chinese movement artist Wan Hui and independent filmmaker Wu Wenguang offer an intimate insight into the urban life of young people in modern China. RCA The Mall SW1 (0171-893 3647), for tickets and information.

MARCEL MARCEAU The 50th anniversary of Bip Marceau's famous white-faced, shaggy-haired alter ego, Bip, is celebrated with a single French performance here. Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1 (0171-893 4201). Tomorrow, 7.30pm.

THE SEAGULL Felicity Kendal plays Madame Arkadina, Michael Pennington a Trigorin and Victoria Hamilton plays Nina in Peter Hall's production of Anton Chekhov's new version of *The Seagull*. Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1 (0171-893 7516). Opens tonight, 7.30pm. Then tomorrow, 7.30pm. In rep.

BLACKPOOL

BLACKPOOL The choreographer Stephen Davies celebrates 25 years of

his work in a new production of *The Lark*. The Lark, Blackpool, Lancs. (01795 420100). Tomorrow, 7.30pm.

THE HERALD Peter Whelan's fascinating play transfers from the Barbican. Teresa Benham plays the character of the daughter, and Stephen Brierley plays the father. Barbican, London EC2 (0171-476 3000). Tomorrow, 7.30pm. Then Saturday, 7.30pm. In rep.

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WEEKEND CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Gillian Mackay

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Law Report May 9 1997 Court of Appeal

Home Secretary entitled to conclude France is a safe third country

Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department and Another, Ex parte Camblot

Before Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Evans and Lord Justice Schiemann

[Judgment April 30]

In deciding whether a third country was safe for the purposes of section 2 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, the Home Secretary was entitled to conclude that there was no real risk that a country would send an asylum seeker to another country other than in accordance with its international obligations.

Despite the concerns of special advisers as to whether asylum seekers in France received a proper opportunity to have their claims determined in accordance with French law, the Home Secretary was entitled to conclude that France was a country to which he could not send an asylum seeker removed under the 1996 Act.

The Court of Appeal on February 14 (The Times February 24) dismissed an appeal by Gulay Camblot against the decision of the Queen's Bench Divisional Court (Lord Bingham of Cornhill, Lord Chief Justice and Lord Justice Schiemann) in *Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department and Another, Ex parte Camblot*.

The Court of Appeal, consisting of Lord Justice Evans, Lord Justice Schiemann and Lord Justice Bingham, dismissed the appeal.

The Home Secretary issued a certificate under section 2 of the 1996 Act authorising her removal from the United Kingdom to France as a third safe country for investigation of her claim for asylum under the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) (Cmd. 9171) and (1967) (Cmd. 3900) and.

The immigration officer refused her leave to enter and removing her from the United Kingdom to France.

The applicant, a Turkish citizen of Kurdish origin, arrived from Paris at Waterloo International Station on August 3, 1996 claiming

political asylum. On September 1, the Home Secretary issued a certificate under section 2 of the 1996 Act authorising her removal to France.

Section 2(1)(a) of the 1996 Act enabled the Home Secretary to direct the removal of an asylum applicant if he had certified that, in his opinion, the conditions in section 2(2) were fulfilled.

Section 2(2) provides: "(2) The conditions are— (a) that the person is not a national or citizen of the country... to which he is to be sent; (b) that his life and liberty would not be threatened in that country... for a Convention reason; and (c) that the government of that country... would not send him to another country... otherwise than in accordance with its international obligations."

This subsection applies to any country... which is or forms part of a member state [of the European Union].

Section 3 provides: "(3) A person who has been, or is to be, sent to a country... to which section 2(2) above applies shall not be entitled to bring or pursue an appeal under this section so long as he is in the United Kingdom."

Mr Manjit Gill and Mr Asoka Dias, for the applicant, Mr David Pannick QC and Mr Mark Shaw, for the Home Secretary.

THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS, giving the judgment of the court, said that the restriction on the right to appeal against the issue of a certificate under section 2(1) of the 1996 Act contained in section 3(3) could be one of substance.

If in fact the country to which a prospective appellant had been or was to be sent was a country which fully protected his Convention rights, then the need to leave the United Kingdom prior to appeal was not significant as in those circumstances there was little purpose in appealing.

If on the other hand that country did not protect his rights, then the

value of the right of appeal exercisable only from abroad in practice was likely to be highly speculative since such a country could well remove him from their territory before he had time to exercise his right of appeal to a special adjudicator in this country.

It was because of that restriction on the right of appeal that it was appropriate to challenge by way of judicial review the grant of a certificate of the Secretary of State without first exhausting the process of appeal under section 3.

Prior to the 1996 Act, special adjudicators when determining appeals had indicated that they were not satisfied that France could be treated as a safe country.

The adjudicators had not been concerned about French substantive law. That did protect asylum seekers in accordance with the Convention. Their concern was as to the danger that when an applicant came to the conclusion that France was a safe country, he would not be given an opportunity to have his position determined in accordance with French law as the Convention required prior to his being deported from France.

Special adjudicators in the course of their work acquired considerable experience of what happened in practice in different countries and as special adjudicators had come to the conclusion that the Secretary of State was under an obligation to satisfy himself that either those decisions were, in his opinion, wrong or that since they had reached their decision the position had changed for the better in France.

It was desirable to clarify the respective roles of the Secretary of State and the courts now that the 1996 Act was in force. It was convenient to start with what an applicant for asylum would be required to establish if the Secretary of State was considering the merits of an application for asylum.

In *R v Secretary of State for the*

Home Department, Ex parte Shivakumaran [1988] AC 988, 994 Lord Keith of Kitchener had said: "It is not to be demonstrated a reasonable degree of likelihood that he will be persecuted for a Convention reason if returned to his own country."

Basing himself upon that statement, Mr Pannick had submitted that the Secretary of State was entitled to ask himself whether, in his opinion, there was a reasonable degree of likelihood that France would send the applicant to Turkey otherwise than in accordance with the Convention. The Divisional Court appeared to have accepted that submission.

Their Lordships did not accept Mr Pannick's adoption of a reasonable degree of likelihood test. That submission involved a lower threshold than that laid down by the Act.

Section 2 required the Secretary of State to be satisfied that the conditions in section 2(2) were fulfilled. The condition which was in issue was "that the government of [France] would not send [her] to another country... other than in accordance with the Convention". The language of the condition was unqualified. It was a test imposed as a requirement of overriding the protection against removal pending determination of an asylum claim which would otherwise be provided by section 6 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Clearly it was necessary to treat the test as not being totally unqualified. It must be subject to the implication that it was permissible to grant a certificate when there existed a system which would, if it operated as it usually did, provide the required standard of protection for the asylum seeker.

No country could provide a system which was 100 per cent effective. There were going to be aberrations. All that could be expected and therefore all that

Parliament could have intended should be in place prior to the grant of a certificate was a system which could be expected not to contravene the Convention.

What was required was that there should be no real risk that the asylum seeker would be sent to another country otherwise than in accordance with the Convention. The unpredictability of human behaviour or the remote possibility of changes in administrative law or procedures which there was no reason to anticipate would not be a real risk.

Mr Pannick had submitted that it was absurd to have one standard to be applied where the Convention was to be applied in this country and another test where the Convention was to be applied in another country.

However, their Lordships did not agree. In *Shivakumaran* the "reasonable degree of likelihood" test was laid down as the standard which an applicant for asylum status had to demonstrate in order to obtain protection.

If the complaint as to a safe country was as to the test applied in determining whether there was a breach of the Convention, no criticism could properly be made of that country if it applied the same test as the UK applied in determining whether the asylum seeker had the necessary well founded fear.

However, where the criticism of the safe country was that the procedures were such that in practice there was a real risk that the applicant would not have an opportunity to demonstrate that there was a reasonable degree of likelihood that he would be persecuted if he was returned by the supposedly safe country then that was a different matter.

The asylum seeker had to comply with an objective test but one

which was not absolute. Their Lordships did not see any reason for applying the same standard which was to be demonstrated whether an asylum seeker should be entitled to exercise his rights of appeal in this country or from a third country to which he was to be removed.

While in the majority of cases both tests might well lead to the same result that did not justify applying the wrong standard in the minority of cases where it would lead to the wrong result.

It was not suggested that the Secretary of State had actually applied the wrong test as a matter of law. The identification of the right test was, however, necessary when considering whether the decision of the Secretary of State was one to which he had been entitled to come on the material before him.

It was for the Secretary of State to evaluate the material. If the Secretary of State could properly come to the decision which he did on that material then the court could not interfere.

He was the person who had to form the opinion. However, in order to form the opinion, it was necessary for him to take such steps as were reasonable in the circumstances to acquaint himself with the relevant facts.

Mr Gill's submission as to the inequality of the position of the asylum seeker as compared with that of the Secretary of State. It was extraordinarily difficult for someone in the position of the applicant to show the Secretary of State could not properly form the opinion that he stated that he did.

Indeed it would be impossible for the asylum seeker even to attempt to do so were it not for the considerable efforts which had been made by the Refugee Legal Centre to protect the position of asylum seekers. Despite very limited resources they had accumulated significant material.

Mr Gill, however, with some justification, pointed out it would not be unduly burdensome on the Secretary of State to take more steps than he did at present to monitor what happened to asylum seekers who were returned to France.

As against that the evidence made it clear that the Secretary of State did cause inquiries to be made in France.

The Secretary of State based his opinion primarily upon:

- 1 France's commitment to a number of international conventions and agreements applying to asylum seekers;
- 2 An assessment of French laws and procedures;
- 3 Information from the director of Direction des Libertés Publiques des Affaires Juridiques and from the British liaison officer in Direction Centrale du Contrôle de l'Immigration et de la Lutte Contre l'Emploi des Cladés et des Indes;
- 4 A lack of evidence contradicting the Secretary of State's opinion.

As to French domestic law, Mr Gill made no complaint. If the law properly operated, then an application for asylum by an applicant returned by this country to France should be appropriately considered by the Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA). If OFPRA became properly seized of an application then it was accepted that there was no real risk of a contravention of the Convention.

What was criticised was the practice adopted by French officials within the prefecture. The effect of the complaints was that there had been a persistent history of officials ignoring requests for asylum and seeking to remove complainants on the basis of a failure to claim asylum when the applicant was previously in France.

The other matter was what happened to Mr Ali Iqbal. After Iqbal had travelled via France to London the Secretary of State

certified that his case was without foundation on the basis that France was a safe third country.

When he returned to France after his appeal had been dismissed officials at the Paris prefecture acted contrary to proper procedures so that his claim for asylum was ignored. Orders for removal were served, apparently in the absence of an interpreter, and attempts were made forcibly to place him in an aeroplane.

The only reason that he was not removed was that the captain of the plane refused to take responsibility for him so that his case received press publicity and he was subsequently allowed to claim asylum in France.

That was obviously a serious departure from proper standards but it had to be seen in the context of France having to deal with more than 20,000 asylum applications in each of the last 10 years. Furthermore, account had to be taken of the fact that the proportion of successful applications was higher in France than in any other member state.

Their Lordships had carefully considered all the material which had been placed before them and understood on the basis of that material the concerns of the special advisers.

However, their Lordships would emphasise the difference between the decisions of the special advisers and the responsibilities of the court. The special advisers on an appeal considered the material which was before them and made their own judgment as to the merits. The court's role was limited to that of review.

Approaching the question as one of review, their Lordships could not say that the Secretary of State had not been entitled to come to the opinion that he did.

Having considered and rejected further grounds raised the court dismissed the appeal.

Solicitors: Bluet & Co. Edmonstone Treasury Solicitor.

Purpose of disqualifying directors

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry v Tjolle and Others

Before Mr Justice Jacob

[Judgment May 2]

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should consider whether the public interest was served by pressing on with an application for the disqualification of a company director when the period of disqualification was likely to be low and the case had been significantly delayed through no fault of the respondent.

Any public interest involved in a disqualification might be outweighed by the de facto disqualification which was often the result of pending proceedings and the legal costs involved, in going through the disqualification process.

Mr Justice Jacob sitting in the Chancery Division so stated when dismissing the Secretary of State's application for an order under section 6 of the Company Directors' Disqualification Act 1986 against three respondents, Dr. Tjolle, Dr. Tjolle and Dr. Tjolle.

The first and second respondents to the application were Valere Nicolas Frederic Tjolle and Therese Evelyn McDermott.

Mr Stephen Davies for the Secretary of State; Mrs Kenning in person.

MR JUSTICE JACOB said that Lead Travel Ltd, a holiday company, went into voluntary liquidation in July 1992 with an estimated deficiency in respect of

unsecured creditors of £12.4 million, including £6.6 million of lost deposits paid by members of the public for future holidays.

The Fraud Squad seized the company's records.

Mr Tjolle owned 999 and Mrs McDermott owned one of the 1,000 issued shares in the company's holding company. Following the appointment of liquidators and the bankruptcy of Mr Tjolle, he pleaded guilty to fraudulent trading and was sentenced to nine months imprisonment and disqualified from being a company director for 10 years.

The Secretary of State was of the opinion that Mr Tjolle's conduct merited the maximum possible period of disqualification under the Act, namely 15 years.

His Lordship said that it was highly desirable that criminal courts should be aware of the disqualification guidelines laid down by the Court of Appeal in *In re Sevenoaks Stationers (Retail) Ltd* [1991] Ch 154.

Civil and criminal courts should apply the same standards. The purpose of disqualification, to protect the public from the activities of those who had been convicted in company management, was the same in both courts.

The period of disqualification was perhaps not always seen as of major concern in a criminal trial where the defendant was also likely to be imprisoned. Nonetheless it was important in the public interest.

It might also be important in the defendant's interests to see that he was in fact disqualified for an appropriate period. If he was under-disqualified he might find himself, like Mr Tjolle, on the receiving end of civil application for the Secretary of State which, if lost, he would have to pay costs.

The Secretary of State rightly felt that in the public interest he should seek a longer period. Mr Tjolle consented to 15 years disqualification and paid agreed costs.

In July 1994, while criminal proceedings were still pending, the Secretary of State launched the current proceedings against the three respondents but proceedings were stayed, without Mrs Kenning's knowledge or consent, until April 1995.

After a pre-trial review and certain other preliminaries a trial date was set but when it became apparent the Mrs McDermott could not attend on that date separate trials were ordered.

Only Mrs Kenning, an employee of the company, was concerned in the trial before his Lordship. The case against her was based on the allegation that she was a de facto director.

It was said for the Secretary of State that the procedural position was fundamentally unsatisfactory and that it was unlikely that the court would ever get at the truth with a split trial, the major consequence of which was that the evidence of one respondent could not be used against the other.

His Lordship did not agree. It was up to the Secretary of State to make his case against any particular respondent. It was essential for convenience that several respondents in a case were normally tried together, and it was entirely possible that one or more

of them might decide not to contest the case.

The charges against Mrs Kenning had to be considered nearly five years after the company's demise and involved events as far back as 1990.

The delay could not in any way be said to be likely to prejudice the public interest in the case. It was difficult to see what real public interest had been served by the case proceeding.

His Lordship thought that in some cases the Secretary of State would do well to consider whether the public interest was really served by pressing on with cases which for some reason really no longer had a point.

The essential purpose of a disqualification order was to protect the public. In incidental effects, particularly when the case was regarded as a director of the company, the stigma of an order, and its deterrent effect on others, were not the purposes of the legislation.

Moreover, proceedings under section 6 of the Act had to be commenced within two years of the company's insolvency, except with leave of court. There was a clear statutory intention that the cases were taken to a conclusion quickly. It was hardly in accordance with that intention that the public interest in the case should be stayed against an individual who had not consented to that stay.

Having considered the charges against Mrs Kenning his Lordship said that even if she was regarded as a director of the company she was wholly unsatisfied that she conducted herself in a manner which made her unfit to be concerned in the management of a company.

Solicitor: Osborne Clarke.

Davy International Ltd and Others v Tazzyman and Others

Before Lord Justice Leggatt, Lord Justice Morritt and Lord Justice Phillips

[Judgment May 1]

The power conferred on the High Court by Order 45, rule 7(7) of the Rules of the Supreme Court to dispense with service of a copy of an order under the rule if it thought it just to do so, was exercisable in respect of a mandatory order after the occurrence of events alleged to constitute a breach of that order, that is, retrospectively.

The Court of Appeal so held dismissing the appeal of the fourth respondent, VAI Industries (UK) Ltd and the first respondent, Herbert Durrig, from the judgment of Mr Justice May on March 10 when, inter alia, he dismissed their applications to strike out the notice of motion of the plaintiffs.

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POSTS

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REGIONAL CONSULTANTS

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The Council intends to appoint eight Regional Consultants with responsibility for managing the Council's relationship with universities, developing relationships with regional bodies and colleges and contributing to the development of the Council's regional policies.

The weight of these posts will vary according to their specific responsibilities, with starting salaries to reflect this in the range indicated above. We are looking for excellent communicators at ease with senior managers of universities and colleges, ready to act as brokers with a wide range of regional bodies, and able to manage project teams. These are challenging opportunities for people who are interested in building on the achievements of universities and colleges in meeting national, regional and local needs. Secondments from higher education institutions will be considered.

OPERATIONS MANAGER

£30,000 to £40,000
Bristol based

The Council intends to appoint an Operations Manager who will be responsible for managing the other Council staff who are involved with relationships with universities and colleges. The main responsibilities are for allocating project responsibilities, developing staff and monitoring their performance. We are looking for an excellent people manager, prepared to take tough decisions while maintaining effective relationships with a wide range of colleagues. A good understanding of the work of the Council is desirable.

If you would like further information and an application form, please write to Zoe Amel, HEFCE, Northdown House, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QD, or telephone our 24hr answerphone on 0177 931 7102 or alternatively, visit our web site at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/jobs/rao-ed.htm>. The closing date for applications is 23 May 1997. The Council is working towards equal opportunities in employment.



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Application forms and further details are available from: The Director of Personnel, Gloscat, Park Campus, 73 The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RF. Telephone: 01242 532101. Fax: 01242 532192. Closing date for applications: Monday 18th May, 1997.



RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Applications are invited from qualified and experienced teachers for posts of Technical and Trained Teachers in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, for the 1997/1998 academic year, in the following subject areas:

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- Technical Drawing/Woodwork
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- Mathematics
- Spanish
- Music
- Art & Craft
- Auto Mechanics/Small Engine Repair
- Masonry
- Home Economics

Applicants for posts in Secondary Schools should possess a degree and/or teaching qualifications from approved institutions in the relevant areas. Successful applicants will be required to teach appropriate subjects up to The Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) standard (Grade 12).

Salaries of the posts are in the Scale \$10 - \$14,800 - \$27,350 per annum.

Entry points on the Scale will be determined by qualifications and experience as follows:

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Incremental credit will be given for a maximum of ten (10) years teaching experience at a ratio of one (1) increment for every two (2) years post-graduate experience.

Application forms may be obtained from The Bahamas High Commission, No. 10 Chesterfield Street, London W1X 8AH enclosing a SAE. Forms complete with copies of qualifications should be returned to the office of The High Commission not later than 16 May, 1997.

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The College intends to appoint a Domestic Bursar to take up his or her duties by 1 October 1997. The Domestic Bursar is responsible to College Council for the maintenance, restoration and modernisation of College buildings, for new building projects and for the provision of services and facilities needed to maintain and develop the College as a place of education, learning and research. Some College buildings have been in continuous use since its foundation in 1496, and others have been added in most subsequent centuries, including the new Quincentenary Library and Computer Centre.

Responsibilities of the Domestic Bursar, working with relevant heads of department, include:

- buildings and buildings maintenance
- catering and housekeeping
- conference and other revenue-producing external trade
- security; and
- gardens and grounds

It is essential that the Domestic Bursar possesses a wide-ranging understanding of, and is sensitive to, the academic purposes of the College. Leadership and personnel management, together with commercial acumen and negotiating skill and the ability to work with a consensus approach to decision-making are of prime importance.

The Domestic Bursar will be a Fellow of the College. The stipend for this full-time appointment will be in the range £31,228 to £34,198 (Steps 23 to 28 of the Universities General Scale of Salaries plus 3% threshold). The post carries eligibility to membership of the Universities Superannuation Scheme. Further particulars may be obtained from Dr Paul Fisher FCA, Senior Bursar, Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL (facsimile 01223 339300), to whom applications, comprising a full curriculum vitae and a covering letter, should be submitted by 31 May 1997. Jesus College is an equal opportunities employer.

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UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENTS



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For an informal discussion of the post, please contact Mr JCF Hayward, Principal of UCS, tel: 01642 335301 or e-mail: J.C.F.Hayward@durham.ac.uk or Dr S C Palmer, Head of Administration of UCS, tel: 01642 335324 or e-mail: Stephen.Palmer@durham.ac.uk

Further details and an application form may be obtained from the Director of Personnel, University of Durham, Old Shire Hall, Durham DH1 1SH (tel: 0191 374 7258, fax: 0191 374 7253 or e-mail: Acad.Recruit@durham.ac.uk).

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OXFORD

Master

The Fellows are proceeding towards electing a successor (male or female) to Prof. WJ Albery FRS, who departs office on 30th September 1997. Anyone who might wish to be considered, or to make a suggestion or nomination, is invited to write in confidence to The Senior Fellow, Dr GJ Sorregh, University College, Oxford OX1 4BA, preferably by 20th May 1997. The College is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

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POSTS

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EDUCATION



Labour's new education and employment team, left to right: Michael Richard, Peter Shaw, Kim Howells, Estelle Morris, John Hedges, Stephen Byers, Alan Howarth, David Blunkett, Michael Barber, Andrew Smith, Baroness Blackstone, Roger Dawe and Nick Stuart

Labour's balancing act

John O'Leary examines the challenges facing the new team at the education department

Every school in England, state and independent, will receive a letter from David Blunkett next week, exhorting them to greater efforts to raise standards. The new Education Secretary will urge teachers to "set aside understandable scepticism" and join in a drive for improvement.

The initiative is intended to herald a new relationship with the teaching profession, where morale is at a low ebb. Thousands are leaving every year, many more would do so if they could afford it, and good graduates to take their place are thin on the ground. After the tough talk and bright ideas of Opposition, Mr Blunkett is conscious that many in education see Labour as almost as prone to teacher-bashing as the Tories. He will need their help if Tony Blair's aims to create a world-class service are to be realised.

The letter, which is not being released in its entirety before hand so that head teachers and governors get the message first, will say: "My intention is that we shall always consult and we shall be setting up machinery to take the views and respond to the suggestions of all those who feel that they have something positive to offer, rather than simply inviting submissions to the department."

Mr Blunkett adds: "We are not interested in dogma. Instead, we are committed to what works. We are interested in standards, not structure. We want to level up because we know that every school is doing something well and

many are doing very well indeed. Our task is to ensure that what has been available to some is available to all."

But the conciliatory tone is hard to square with the promise of "zero tolerance of underperformance". On the same afternoon that Mr Blunkett's letter was being outlined, Stephen Byers, the Minister for School Standards, was turning the spotlight back on to failing schools, threatening to close those that did not improve.

The new team sees no conflict in the two approaches: competent teachers have nothing to fear. But the balancing act is one of several that will have to be carried off in the coming months. Labour's manifesto was short on detail in a number of delicate areas, some of which will require urgent attention. What exactly will happen to grant-maintained schools, for example? How will the Government respond to the Dearing review of higher education?

Perhaps the most urgent questions concern pre-school education, where the Government has pledged to issue no more nursery vouchers but has guaranteed continuity for all four-year-olds who present-

ly have them. With thousands more children turning four by the start of the next school year, there is little time to devise a replacement system.

Mr Byers called for a report on the problem even before making his statement on failing schools. It will be too late to rescue the tens of thousands of four-year-olds who have been crammed into unsuitable

primary school reception classes, but he cannot afford to ignore the playgroups and private nurseries which will have an important part to play in delivering Labour's promise of universal nursery provision in 18 months' time.

For all its inexperience in government, the new ministerial team has an almost unprecedented track record in its field. All five education ministers have taught, either in schools or higher education. Two have run education authorities and one a university college. Although now specialising in employment, Alan Howarth even finds himself back in the office he occupied as Higher Education Minister.

The presence of so many familiar faces will reassure some of those in education who felt that Labour's programme promised too little.

But they will know that there is little Mr Blunkett can do in the short term about the funding pressures on schools, colleges and universities. The Conservative spending plans adopted by Gordon Brown allow for a worsening squeeze, with only infant schools anticipating an early boost from the abolition of assisted places.

Mr Blunkett has tried to dampen expectations by warning of a £69 million "black hole" in the budget for further education colleges, which he wants to play a key role in the welfare to work programme. The windfall tax should plug the gap, but other areas of the education budget will have to wait for Labour to fulfil its longer-term promise to devote a larger share of public spending.

University lecturers and vice-chancellors have already staked their claim, but only Sir Ron Dearing's report, due out in July, can provide the ammunition they need to alter the Government's spending priorities. The review will provide the first test of policy-making beyond the manifesto, with rough decisions ahead on the size of the higher education system and the requirement for graduates to pay more towards their education.

The schools lobby will not be far behind in demanding more money, but Mr Blunkett will want to concentrate on measures that can be implemented without extra funding.

There is plenty of unfinished business on target-setting, the curriculum, testing and assessment which can occupy the new team, who will soon be busy drafting the June White Paper and with the even more time-consuming task of pushing through legislation.

There is plenty of scope for disagreement, meanwhile, if next week's appeal fails to convince teachers. The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers has given a warning that its support does not extend to increasing a workload that it already finds unreasonable. Other groups are willing to give Labour the benefit of the doubt, but will expect Tony Blair's rhetoric about education, education and education to bear fruit before long.

Phil Revell on advice to schools about coping with asthma

When children cannot breathe



Val Harrison and her daughter Jade

AS A child, Val Harrison went to school for half a day a week, if she was well enough. She did not attend school full-time until the age of 11. She spent frequent spells in hospital and came close to death on several occasions. And the disease which had this devastating effect? Asthma.

The Greeks recognised the condition 2,000 years ago, naming it "the panting attack". It is one of the most common ailments, with more than three million sufferers in Britain. In schools, the average class will have two or three cases, one in seven children of school age are diagnosed as having asthma.

About 1,600 people died of the condition in 1994. Most of these are adult deaths, but more than 150 children are admitted to hospital each day with asthma-related problems.

These figures have prompted the National Asthma Campaign to raise awareness in schools of asthma and related problems. At a conference yesterday in Stoke-on-Trent, speakers from a range of disciplines addressed the kind of issues that schools need to consider. On the agenda were new Department for Education and Employment guidelines. If followed by schools, they should reduce the stress for children with asthma-related complaints.

Pauline Eldridge, a parent, feels that guidelines are overdue. Her two children, Tony and Alex, have asthma that is easily managed by inhalers. The problem comes at school where teachers have held the inhalers centrally. "There have been several occasions when Tony needed his inhaler in class and the teacher has said that he had to wait," Mrs Eldridge believes children should carry their inhalers: the new advice now states "Children must have immediate access to their inhalers when they need them."

The situation arises from a lack of awareness and from teachers' reluctance to become involved in duties for which they have no training. Many worry about the legal position should anything go wrong.

At the conference these concerns were addressed by Chris Doak, a health and safety officer with Devon County Council. His county has developed a policy based on the campaign's framework and the DEE guidelines. Mr Doak feels that this anxiety is misplaced and that teachers have an important role to play in making life easier and simpler for the asthma sufferer.

"Teachers need to be reassured that if they

are operating under clear guidance and advice they have the protection of the law. There needs to be a clear statement from the employer," Mr Doak says.

There have been no cases where professionals in loco parentis have been sued successfully as a result of first aid or basic medical care given in good faith, but there have been cases where teachers have been taken to court for failing to act.

Paul Hanbury, the headteacher at Brookhouse Green Primary in Stoke-on-Trent, says that the approach schools need to adopt is "very simple". His own children are asthma sufferers and a friend lost a child to asthma. He believes that schools have a responsibility to act. "I see the child in a holistic way, I am as interested in their physical well-being as I am in their educational attainment. The two are related. The two are related."

Mr Hanbury believes that the curriculum should include more time on health matters. "What's more basic than learning how to handle your own health?" he says.

Mr Hanbury's school has an asthma register. Children are encouraged to carry their inhalers and spares are kept within reach. The inhalers follow the children on to the playing fields and are taken on trips.

THIS approach was commended by Bob Wilson, a consultant and asthma specialist based at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital in Shropshire. The child's inhaler needs to be immediately available, "less than one minute away". Mr Wilson believes that asthma deaths are "almost wholly preventable", and that very simple training would enable teachers to deal with attacks with confidence.

He has little patience with "alternative" approaches. A view shared by Ms Harrison who, as a child, was prescribed "a regime of exercise, heat ray treatment, swimming and playing a wind instrument". Her asthma settled down in her teens about the same time as the first broncho-dilators became available. Her condition worsened again after the birth of her children. Her eldest daughter, Jade, developed asthma "despite all I could do to prevent it by breast feeding, monitoring of her diet and so on." Val gave Jade responsibility for her inhaler as soon as possible and she feels that most primary age children could cope with the responsibility. She says: "Teachers with asthmatics in their class should be made aware of what to do if a child has an attack."

Am I for the scrapheap?

A lecturer reveals how research rankings have threatened his job

In the next few weeks my university will vote on a plan to restructure academic departments. This is the direct result of December's research assessment exercise.

Initially, it was thought that we had done rather well. There was great rejoicing. The vice-chancellor sent out an official memo congratulating staff on their performance. Unfortunately, our competitors had done even better. Less than a month later, when the Government issued the financial allocations, it became clear that the university was heading for a massive deficit.

The administration decided that more than 40 academic posts must be lost. Just before the spring holiday, a draft for restructuring was issued. Whole departments were to disappear. Panic ensued. Ashen-faced deans clustered in corridors, e-mails proposing rescue schemes circulated; the Association of University Teachers issued warnings about strike action.

University officials emphasised that the draft plan was not a final statement and that modifications would be considered. Nonetheless, speed was of the essence. The administration says that it wishes to meet its target only through voluntary redundancies, but it has not ruled out compulsion should it prove necessary. Academics are notoriously

bad at changing careers. Who would want a 50-year-old classicist who is the greatest living expert on Plato's use of the article? The spectre of compulsory redundancy has haunted us all. Who would be the unlucky ones? Would it be those on short-term contracts? We all wished it would be someone other than ourselves.

Yet, from a legal point of view there is a simple answer. Since its foundation, my university has granted staff life tenure. This was to ensure complete academic freedom. No one could be dismissed for having the "wrong" opinions.

The conditions of service are explicit: the tenure for all academics is to extend to the age of retirement. All those appointed to permanent positions who have passed the required probationary period are entitled to remain in the post until the age of 67, according to the original university statutes.

This does not mean, however, that all academics are safe. In 1987, Parliament passed a law that allows for tenure to be withdrawn from all individuals appointed to university posts after November 1987, or from those who have had a change in contract from that date. This, in effect, meant those who were promoted to a higher grade. Thus, everyone who moved up from lecturer level to senior lecturer



or beyond would lose tenure, so long as they were being paid more as a result.

After this law was passed, an official governmental commission was instructed to change the royal charters of all universities. The rules of redundancy were altered, enabling universities to remove non-tenured staff from those departments which were being closed for financial reasons.

This means that there are now two classes of academic: those who have retained life tenure because they were appointed before November 1987 and have had no change in contract since, and those appointed or promoted after that date.

The acute observer will realise that, in some cases, those who are elderly and who were promoted before 1987, as well as those who failed to make

the grade, are the ones with life tenure.

The bright young things, the new vigorous appointments and the dynamic researchers whose talents have been recognised through advancement, are the ones who are now at risk.

The administration has not taken steps to inform academics of their legal rights; after all, it is not in its interest to do so. New appointments and promoted staff want to conceal the facts in the hope that they will be safe and the AUT is committed to protecting the jobs of all academic staff regardless of their contractual status.

In the end, however, my university will be compelled to recognise this distinction. Staff on short-term contracts cost nothing to dismiss. The dons who can be made redundant are entitled to receive only one week's salary for every year that they have been employed in the system. But it could cripple any university to make staff with life tenure redundant. There is the possibility that someone aged 50, who is earning about £28,000 a year, could cost as much as £500,000 to remove because technically they are owed their remaining lifetime salary. No institution can face the risk of such a bill.

In the end, tenure will protect those who were fortunate enough to obtain it, despite the wish of the administration to dismiss those whom it no longer wants to employ.

AN EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

THE TIMES

Get a free child ticket for the London Planetarium



The Times, in association with the London Planetarium, offers you the chance to get a free child ticket to one of London's most exciting venues. Following its £4.5 million relaunch, the London Planetarium has introduced a specially-created show which gives visitors a unique perspective of the solar system through the eyes of space travellers. It includes an exploding supernova, space probes, Neptune's hurricane storms, Saturn and Titan's methane snowstorms, a panoramic sweep across the canyons of Mars and a zoom through London.

HOW TO APPLY

Take the voucher which will be published in The Times tomorrow plus two tokens to The London Planetarium, London. When you purchase one full-paying adult ticket, for £5.65 you will be admitted with one child at no extra charge. (A child is 16 and under.) This offer is valid until May 31, 1997. The London Planetarium is open daily between 10am-5.30pm. First public show 12.20pm weekdays, 10.20am weekends.



CHANGING TIMES

RUGBY UNION: WORLD CUP-WINNER READY FOR FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Leicester look to Stransky to play the pivotal role

David Hands finds a player returning to the stage he deserves at Twickenham

You would suppose that the man who dropped the goal that won the World Cup might have been able to write his own passport to a happy and successful future. In fact, it took Joel Stransky little more than 14 months to understand that he had little or no future in the South Africa national team and that he should seek employment elsewhere.

"When it was suggested to me that Joel might be available, I was flabbergasted," Bob Dwyer said. "To me, he is one of the two complete fly halves in world rugby."

Neither Dwyer nor Peter Wheeler, respectively director of rugby and chief executive of Leicester, needed to be persuaded that Stransky might be the missing cog in the Leicester works that will see them close a turbulent season in the Pilkington Cup final against Sale at Twickenham tomorrow.

It will be a bitter-sweet occasion for the South African, because Stransky, 29, is a professional sportsman who has found acceptance in a foreign environment and has helped his adopted club to within sight of a trophy in only four months; bitter, because the passionate atmosphere invoked by the 75,000 crowd at Twickenham can only stir memories of that June day in 1995 when Stransky, Francois Pienaar and their colleagues became world champions.

Stransky's fall from grace in his native land is, in a sense, a tale of South Africa's failure to capitalise on the national euphoria evoked by the 15-12 extra-time victory over New Zealand at Ellis Park stadium in Johannesburg. First, the management team broke up and then Stransky found himself the target of a smear campaign, with whispered innuendoes of misbehaviour.

Stransky's fervent denial cut little ice with André Markgraaff, the new coach and manager to the national team, who was forced to resign himself earlier this year, accused of racial abuse. "He told me I had been involved in a disgusting sideshow," Stransky said; at the same time, the necessity for dental surgery prevented him playing for six weeks and his omission from the South Africa tour party to Argentina, France and Wales last autumn convinced him that a change of environment was necessary.

Stransky makes no bones about the benefits he has enjoyed from rugby, even before its official professionalisation in August, 1995. The game took precedence when he was at university in Durban, he discovered exciting possibilities with Cahors in France and the Italian clubs, L'Aquila and San Dona,

and the financial structures that operated within South African rugby have long been acknowledged.

Now he is at Leicester. He had an offer from Racing Club in Paris and met representatives from Harlequins, but the personal experience of the family atmosphere at Welford Road helped convince him that he could rediscover his enjoyment in the game in the Midlands.

"I had no preconceptions about rugby in England. I expected it to be tough and challenging and it has been. What rugby boils down to is communication, understanding what players want from each other and that hasn't been hard because the Leicester pack has gone so well."

"I'm comfortable with the decision-making that playing fly half involves. It helps me that I played centre and wing

when I was younger. It's a natural position, it's like being a striker in football — these guys who score goals have the instinct."

Stransky's ability to decide where the ball will go, apart from earning him the No 10 shirt initially with Northern Transvaal before spells with Natal and Western Province, also brought him 23 appearances for South Africa and 240 international points. Leicester have only started to appreciate the skills he brings to the game. The most obvious is his sheer points-scoring ability: in 14 appearances, he has registered 186 points, 101 of them in the eight full league games in which he has played. He has a strike rate of 75 per cent, but he is far more, as Dwyer suggests, than a kicking pivot: he gives a game tactical direction and it is his willingness to pull in opposing back-row forwards that can create opportunities for his centres.

His joust with Simon Mannix, Sale's New Zealand fly half, will be integral to the fate of the Pilkington Cup.



Stransky has added class to Leicester's colours this season

Baldwin climbs to prominence

By David Hands

THE England management team will meet tomorrow to finalise the replacements required for the party to tour Argentina, which leaves on May 18. Both their middle-of-the-line jumpers, Martin Bayfield and John Fowler, are unavailable because of injuries and the revisions may include players who oppose each other in the Pilkington Cup final.

Both Dave Baldwin, the Sale lock forward, and Matt Poole, of Leicester, have been told to stand by and, were they to be required in Argentina, the wheel would have gone full circle for both. Poole was a member of the England side that went to Buenos Aires in 1990, without winning a cap, and Baldwin has not toured with an England team since visiting New Zealand with England B in 1992.

Poole, 28, also toured South Africa in 1994, but Baldwin, 30, has not even made an appearance for England A in the past five years, though he remains one of the outstanding technicians in English club rugby. On the other hand, the selectors may wish to consider the claims of

younger players, such as Rob Fidler, of Gloucester, or Chris Murphy, of West Hartlepool.

Geoff Cooke, the Bedford director of rugby, has applauded the play-off system introduced this season, even though his club's hopes of promotion to the Courage Clubs Championship first division took a blow on Wednesday. Bedford will play the second leg at Bristol on Sunday with a nine-point deficit, after losing 20-11, but Cooke believes that it has given second-division clubs a valuable incentive, of which Coventry took immediate advantage by beating London Irish 10-14 in the first leg.

"It has given everyone something extra to play for," Cooke said. "I'm sure the first-division clubs don't like it, but it gives us an unexpected chance of the big time." He has received assurances from Frank Warren, the Bedford owner, that resources will be available to recruit during the summer, although on Sunday they will be without Rudolf Strauß, the South African back-row forward, who ruptured an Achilles tendon against Bristol.

SPORTS LETTERS

Hereford have point of return

From Professor C. Bamforth Sir, The future over the survival of Brighton in the Football League, with the attendant relegation of Hereford United to the Conference, bewilders me. Naturally, one applauds Brighton for their astonishing feat, seemingly achieved against extreme adversity. Obviously, too, one sympathises with Hereford, as one does with any club that has finished bottom of its division. One thinks warmly of this club for various reasons, not least its past contribution to FA Cup giantkilling.

However, Hereford will not be embarking on (and Brighton have not been saved from) some twilight world of third-rate football, populated by also-rans and ne'er-do-wells. The Conference is merely one step down the soccer pyramid, and hardly represents more significant a downturn than relegation from any of the divisions of the Football League. Even if Hereford continue to plummet, as did the likes of Southport, Barrow and Workington before them,

they will find a world of football that is a joy and from which it is perfectly possible to return.

There is only one true chasm in the world of English football, and that is between the Premier League and the Football League. The divide is characterised by a discontinuity in fiscal reward and exposure, to a degree far surpassing that occurring beneath this competition, right the way through the leagues.

The Premier League stands apart as being closer to the world of entertainment. I contend that sporting values and genuine pleasure in the game of football for its own sake exist in inverse proportion to the status of a league in the footballing pyramid.

Hereford will find a quality of football hardly discernible from that which they have left, but, more importantly, they will encounter good spirit in refreshing new surroundings.

Yours faithfully,
C. W. BAMFORTH,
Vincent House,
Wishborough Green,
West Sussex.

Empty Saturdays

From Mr Jeremy Hill

Sir, The English cricket season is now being firmly wagged by the tail: to avoid the disruption of the Axa Life League in the middle of Britannic Assurance championship games means that the latter must start on Wednesdays, giving even less genuine cricket for the weekend spectator. Even the quarter-finals and semi-finals of the knockout competitions are in midweek, so requiring the working population to take holiday. Why could these not be played on a Saturday, with Sunday league games being moved, just as they are for the final?

The presence of overseas players continues to be a

thorny issue. To play alongside the likes of Allan Donald and Wasim Akram is of enormous benefit for young English players, and there was a noticeable improvement in the ability to deal with Anil Kumble's variations once they had been on show for a season. However, to give the likes of Jacques Kallis and Mohammad Akram experience of our conditions must run counter to the aims of the English team. I would propose a minimum of 30 Tests for any overseas signing to avoid our giving valuable experience to international opponents.

Yours faithfully,
JEREMY HILL,
96 Crabtree Lane,
Harpenden,
Hertfordshire.

Through the hoop

From Mr Justin Green

Sir, I must disagree with the comments of Max Mosley, head of the world automobile federation, that the world prefers football to basketball (report, May 2). Does he appreciate the technical brilliance, the athleticism and the need to win? All NBA teams have to play 80-plus games in a season; their only break is the All-Star weekend, where the top players still have to play one game or at least compete in the slam dunk competition.

Basketball is all about tactics and a game plan, similar to Formula One. The pit-stops are time-outs, grandly taken at the most opportune moments. The tyre change is the substitution of different players. The excitement of Formula One matches basketball, where you don't get many 0-0 draws. Jack Nicholson takes time off from filming whenever the

Los Angeles Lakers play at home, so, for around 40 days of the season, production stops for five men running around like headless chickens and throwing balls at hoops.

Yours faithfully,
JUSTIN GREEN,
Grafton House, Conduit Road,
Stamford, Lincolnshire.

Beyond city limits

From Mr L. E. Smith

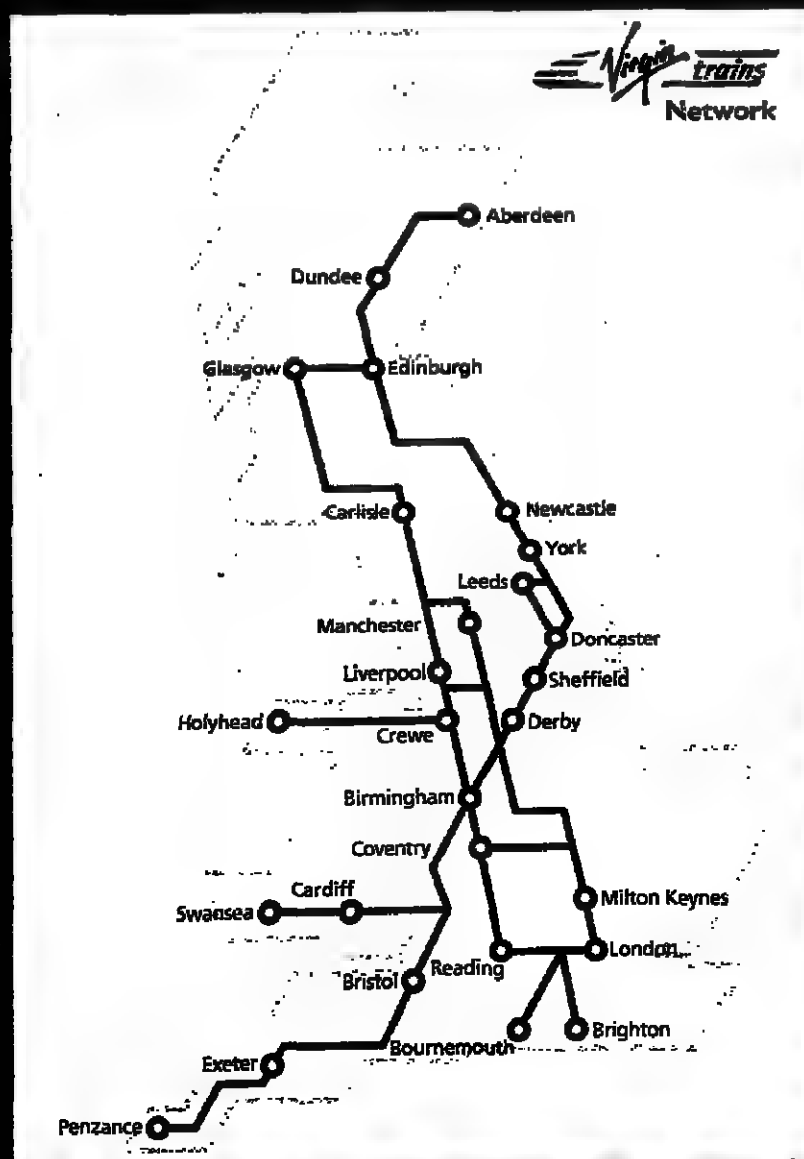
Sir, How can the city of Manchester (report, May 5) be associated with, or claim credit for, the success of the other football teams mentioned? Macclesfield is in Cheshire, Wigan is as close to Liverpool as I am sure the residents of Bolton and Bury do not see themselves as citizens of Manchester. The more-or-less defunct county of Greater Manchester has been confused with the smaller city.

Yours faithfully,
L. E. SMITH,
Isiryn,
St George Road,
Abergele, Conwy.

Sports Letters may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5211.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

TEST DRIVE A VIRGIN TRAIN.



Don't miss The Sunday Times this Sunday for details.

THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

GOLF: IRISHMAN EMERGES FROM UNDERGOING PAINFUL TREATMENT TO MAKE A STRONG CHALLENGE

Laser guides O'Connor to target

By JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT

FOR a game that is supposed to be no more demanding than a gentle stroll in the sunshine, golf inflicts a rare price in injuries. Not long after José María Olazábal was forced to spend hours lying down because he could not bear to put any weight on his feet, Christy O'Connor Jr had to have laser treatment on his left arm. What he could smell was his own burning flesh.

When the condition that started as tennis elbow was at its worst and the pain so great that he could not lift a saucer or squeeze a tube of toothpaste, O'Connor wondered whether he would ever be able to play golf again. At his gloomiest, he thought he would have to live the rest of his life on the memories that included the celebrated two iron he hit at The Belfry in his singles against Fred Couples in the 1989 Ryder Cup. This stroke enabled him to defeat the American by one hole and set up the tied match that meant Europe retained the trophy they had won at Muirfield Village two years earlier.

The welcome evidence that the laser treatment had worked for O'Connor came with a 68, four under par, in the opening round of the Benson and Hedges International Open at The Oxfordshire. O'Connor is one stroke behind Greg Turner.

"I came here on Tuesday and it started to snow," Turner said. "I thought I'd just go home. I wasn't in the pro-am so I didn't come to the club and I was glad about that because playing in these conditions would probably have messed up my swing. The strategy has worked."

O'Connor, who had four birdies and 14 pars, was one of only four of the 155-strong field to have a bogey. He made light of the south-westerly wind, which at times was blowing up to 20mph. A couple of putts failed to drop — from three feet on the 2nd, four feet on the 4th for example — but, otherwise, it was a round of which to be proud.

O'Connor described the laser treatment as like "touching a red hot grill". "You're black from the burns," he said. "There are sparks and things. I know exactly how Olazábal must have felt, especially so young. You appreciate your life when you're out of it."

O'Connor was never a really hard worker and now he can do even less than he used



Montgomery, left, trudges off after producing some poor golf, but with a challenging 70 in the Benson and Hedges International Open

to do. He limits his daily practice to 100 balls and a round of golf and, by wearing a tight armband on his left arm, he is rediscovering his form. "The armband helps to disperse the pain," O'Connor said. "I tell myself the arm is not sore." He wants to remain competitive because, at 48, he is only two years away from the seniors tour, which he believes will yield him rich financial pickings.

Montgomery's two under par was puzzling because it was so erratic. The Oxfordshire is a tough and long course and he played it in the morning when it was at its toughest and longest. Even so, he would not normally find it so difficult to complete holes in the required figures or even fewer. He had four bogeys, one double-bogey and only five pars. He went from the 18th to the 9th, his 18th, without one par. Yet he also

had eight birdies and went round in 70. What is wrong with Montgomery? Does he still bear the scar tissue of his bruising encounter alongside Tiger Woods in the third round at the Masters? Has he not got his 81 in the fourth round at Augusta out of his system? Or was this just another of those rounds that come along from time to time in golf — like the 84 with which he concluded this same event at this venue this time last year.

Europe's leading golfer these past four years not only ran up some amateurish scores, he hit some amateurish shots. On the 1st, he hit a sand wedge only three-quarters of the way to his target. Likewise, his pitch on the 6th only travelled 47 of its 67 yards and, on the 8th, he hit an eight-iron only 80 yards and into water when it should have travelled 130 yards.

Montgomery intended to use the 50-mile drive to his new home in Oxshott in Surrey as a time for analysing these strange strokes. "I have got to be positive and think I have had all those disasters and could have shot 80," he said. "Actually, it was a 70 and that is not bad. I shall come back and try something different. Five pars is not my idea of fun."

FIRST ROUND

Great Britain and Ireland unless stated
67: G Turner (42) 68: C O'Connor Jr, 69: J Lomas, D Clarke, A Collier, L Westwood, R Gosselin (64), P Mitchell, P Blandford (65), S May (65), C Simeon (66), C Montgomery, P Lavery, B Langer (67), P Broadhurst, D Howell, K Vanclo, P D Borge (68), Wootton, G Orr, S McFarlane, S Luff (69), N Fitch (70), 71: J Gault (69), R Bostall, J Coates (70), J Gault (71), D Gault (72), D Gault (73), P Macdonald (74), P Baker, T Bann (75), R Kesteven (76), J Spence, D Emerson (77), J Robson, P Price, R Battersby, M A Martin (80), P McEvoy, M A Jimenez (81), D Robertson, S Webster, J Payne (82), J Payne (83), J Payne (84), S Baker, K Eriksson (85), S Allen (86), J Haeggen (87)

Fairclough aiming to make quick amends

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

LORA FAIRCLOUGH, of Lancashire, will make an early bid towards regaining her Solheim Cup place in the opening American Express Tour event of the season in Portugal today. Fairclough is one of the 120 starters in the 54-hole inaugural Estoril Open, being held near Lisbon.

Last year, Fairclough was in line for an automatic place in the Europe side for the Solheim Cup at St Pierre, but missed out when she was overtaken in the final counting tournament before the match. This week, the chase for points begins towards selection for the match against the United States at Muirfield Village in Ohio next year.

Becker and Stich suffer early exits

BORIS BECKER and Michael Stich were eliminated from the German Open in Hamburg yesterday. Playing in cold, overcast conditions, Becker lost to Felix Mantilla, of Spain, 7-6, 6-2 and Stich was defeated in straight sets by Slava Dosedel, of the Czech Republic, 7-6, 6-2. A third Wimbledon champion was also beaten when Richard Krajicek, of Holland, was beaten 6-1, 6-4 by Andrei Medvedev, of the Ukraine. Medvedev then had to play a second time, beating Jacobo Diaz, a qualifier, from Spain.

Italians in command

CYCLING: Mario Cipollini led an Italian sweep of the first three places on the second stage of the Tour of Romandy yesterday, but it was a bad day for his compatriot, Claudio Chiappucci, who failed a blood test. Cipollini claimed the 173km stage to Estavayer-le-lac in Switzerland in an exciting sprint, crossing two bike lengths ahead of the pack in a 4hr 21min 46sec. Mario Traversoni was second and Fabio Baldato third.

Return in Romania

RUGBY UNION: Arwel Thomas will make his international comeback for Wales A against Romania in Bucharest on May 24. The stand-off half, who missed the final five nations' match of the season, against England, because of injury, will be partnered at half back by Paul John. They are two of 11 full internationals in a side that includes the teenage wing threequarter, Gareth Wynn, of Pontypridd.

Sohail apologises

CRICKET: Aamir Sohail, the Pakistan opener, has submitted an "unconditional" apology to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), cricket officials said yesterday. They said the PCB's council would review the two-year ban against him, imposed last month for violating a PCB code of conduct by publicly accusing teammates of involvement in match-fixing and taking bribes to throw matches.



Sohail: sorry

Newcomers for Wales

BOWLS: Jonathan Willis, of Port Talbot, and Zoe Silverthorne, of Croesyddiog, will make their international debuts for Wales in the women's home international series in Ayr from June 20 to 23. Four former internationals — Val Howell, of Merthyr Tydfil, Pam John, of Cardiff, and Shirley Gough and Shirley King, both of Llandrindod Wells — have been recalled.

Redgrave honoured

SPORTS AWARDS: Steve Redgrave, who won his fourth Olympic rowing gold medal in 1996, yesterday received the Variety Club and Outward Bound Trust's sportsman of the year award from the Duke of Edinburgh. Denise Lewis, the heptathlete, took the women's award and Manchester United the team prize. Disabled awards went to Chris Holmes, the swimmer, and Jo Jackson, for dressage.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

This Refresher on discarding is about helping your partner.

♠ K732		♠ QJ55	
♥ QJ75		♥ 83	
♦ J104		♦ 9	
♣ 104		♣ QJ885	
W		E	
S		♠ K9	
		♦ J542	
		♠ 82	
♠ A106			
♥ A83			
♦ KQ			
♣ KQ855			
W		E	
S		♠ 10	
Pass		Pass	
1H		1C	
NT		NT	

RACING: HILLS FAMILY DEPRIVED OF FAIRYTALE SUCCESS AS SANGSTER COMPLETES FAMOUS TREBLE

Royal Court displays sense of theatre

By Richard Evans
RACING CORRESPONDENT

FOR Robert Sangster it was a dream come true, but for the father and son combination of Barry and Michael Hills the dream was shattered yesterday when the Ormonde Stakes at Chester crashed their hopes of a fairytale success.

As the much-spattered leader turned for home, Hills senior could hardly believe his luck as he peered through the gloom and saw his two runners, Moonax and Further Flight, vying for the lead, with the day's feature race apparently at their mercy.

Nap: TANGO KING
(2.20 Nottingham)
Next best: MUSHARAK
(4.20 Lingfield Park)

The cantankerous but talented Moonax, racing with an enthusiasm normally reserved for biting people, was in from briefly before Further Flight took over. The magnificent old warhorse, now 11, was being urged on by most of the drenched spectators in the Roadway—and the man in the saddle.

For more than a week Michael Hills has been stuck on the 999-winner mark. At last, the thousandth riding success of his career seemed within his grasp—on the horse which he calls "my best friend".

Unfortunately, John Reid



Royal Court, right, edges ahead of Further Flight in a thrilling duel for the Ormonde Stakes at Chester yesterday

and Royal Court had not read the script. Royal Court, scrubbed along by Reid for much of the race, finally got the message and, as the furlong pole loomed, the Saddle's Wells colt began to close the gap. Further Flight sensed the

threat and stuck out his neck but was overhauled inside the final 100 yards.

"It's so annoying," Hills senior said. "Michael said he had the winner some cold at one stage. It would have been so nice for him to have ridden

his thousandth winner on the horse which has done so much for his career."

However, as the Hills lamented their misfortune, Sangster was in a London restaurant celebrating a notable treble. The hard-fought

win of Royal Court, trained by Peter Chapple-Hyam, came after the owner-breeder's silks were carried to victory by Panama City in the Chester Vase and Top Cees in the Chester Cup, the other feature races of the three-day meeting.

With Barry Hills pulling out the stops, only three runners were to post. Crystal Hearted, the 9-2 outsider, handled the heavy ground. Barnum Sands and Teofilo, the 5-4 joint-favourites, did not. End of story. The winner, owned by Carolyn Poland and trained by Henry Candy, her brother-in-law, is entered in the Derby. "But you can't call that a true Derby trial in those conditions," Michael Poland, the owner's husband, stated realistically.

The most striking performance of the afternoon came in the opening EBF Spon Maiden Fillies Stakes when Bodfordminton justified the high regard in which she is held by her trainer, Alan Bailey.

"I think she is very good; the best I have ever had. She might end up going for group races. On good ground she is something else. I worked her with two older horses who have won and I could not believe it. I thought I was dreaming."

On the subject of dreams, there was a cautious reaction yesterday to plans, announced by Michael Osborne, for a \$20 million world series of races in the millennium. Given the opposition to the formation of a European Breeders' Cup, because of differences between various countries, achieving agreement for a world thoroughbred series will not be easy. "Where will it fit into the pattern of racing, not just nationally, but internationally?" John Dunlop, the Arundel trainer, asked.

LINGFIELD PARK

1.50 Pengamon	3.20 Crown Court
2.20 Willow Dale	3.50 Classic Beauty
2.50 Whisky Mack	4.20 Musharak
	4.50 MARCH CRUSADER (nap)

The Times Private Handicapper's top ratings: 3.20 CHEWITT.

Our Newmarket Correspondent: 3.20 Crown Court.

GUIDE TO OUR RACECARD

Recorded number: 100 in brackets: 3-figure form: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100. 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Graveney's new dawn awaits warmer welcome



Graveney: frustrated

Among the handful of shivering souls at Headingley yesterday was a tall man wearing an extremely old wax jacket and a newly-acquired look of expressive suffering. The international season has not yet begun, but David Graveney is fast learning the frustrations of being chairman of selectors.

Graveney had not seen a ball bowled this week, despite clocking up hundreds of motorway miles, and the waterlogged state of the Yorkshire ground told him his luck was not about to alter. Even before the official abandonment of the second day's play against Glamorgan, he had pointed his car south-west towards Bristol and the distant hope of cricket.

Three hours later, on arrival at Gloucestershire's match with Hampshire, he knew that his day was fated. "The rain began as I pulled into the car park," Graveney

reported. "I think I shall now retire for the day."

His fellow selectors, Mike Gatting and Graham Gooch, have also endured wasted journeys this week, as a capricious spring continues to undermine the fixture list. "There is nothing we can do but keep turning up," Graveney said. "I am a great believer in listening to people and this has at least given me plenty of time for that."

Graveney, indeed, is reforming the image of the selection process by his accessibility and openness. Along with the England committee chairman, Bob Bennett, he is encouraging the players to feel that they have an audience at management level. He is also consulting widely within the game, canvassing views on pitches, policy and personnel for the series against Australia. On Wednesday, he visited two Test match grounds, Edgbaston and Old Trafford, and he will make

Alan Lee meets the chairman of selectors on his long-distance attempts to find cricket to watch

a point of seeing them all at appropriate times. While it has always been English custom to shrink from preparing pitches that could inconvenience the opposition, Graveney has a firm view about the type of surfaces on which his team should play and intends to convey it to every ground authority.

Whether he will receive much sympathy at Edgbaston, where the priority, after two highly-criticised Test pitches, is simply to make the match last five days, must be questionable.

A week tomorrow, the selectors must choose their first squad of the summer, for the three Test matches, one-day internationals starting at Headingley on May 22. Before then, Graveney will criss-

cross the country a few more times, a commitment to see and being seen that was not always shared by his immediate predecessor. He must also fit in some surgery on a leg ailment, but it was not the travel nor the operation that brought a frown to his face yesterday, so much as the state of England's leading players.

The batting, especially, is in a mess, with either form or fitness concerns over every senior player. Chiefly because of this, the selectors may expand their party from the usual 14 to 15. They may also decide that the time is right for some new faces, in which event I expect to see Chris Adams given a chance to fulfil his evident potential at the top of the order.

No one has ever doubted the potential of Mark Ramprakash, either, but his big-match temperament is another matter. He has a champion in Gatting, however, and as he has begun the season prolifically, there is a case for reviving his international career in a one-day environment, where he would have no time to fret and freeze, rather than in the elongated tension of a Test match.

Ramprakash's prospects are rising daily, in direct proportion to the decline of those who toured ahead of him last winter. Graveney shakes his head over the litany of low scores and misadventure that has assailed his established batsmen and his greatest hope is that the finger injury restricting Alec Stewart does not prevent him keeping wicket, for this would require wholesale reorganisation of the Test side.

Of the others, Michael Atherton and John Crawley are in the poorest form. Crawley's scores in the Benson and Hedges Cup are 0, 2, 0 and 0, while Atherton's fortunes were exemplified when he strained a hamstring last week and was run out, blamelessly, when his runner went walk-about at square-leg.

Nasser Hussain has missed several matches with a neck injury and Nick Knight failed yesterday on his comeback from the badly broken hand that he sustained in New Zealand. Graham Thorpe has not yet sparked and Graeme Hick's aggregate of 94 runs from seven innings is no encouragement towards what would, in any event, be a controversial selection.

The batting places, then, are still to be claimed over the coming week. Graveney just hopes to be present when weather and form take a turn for the better, allowing his brow to clear and that wax jacket to be put away for the winter.

Champions made to suffer by Newport

BY SIMON WILDE

WORCESTER (second day of four): Leicestershire, with five first-innings wickets in hand, are 215 runs behind Worcestershire

A SUPERB spell by Phil Newport, the veteran Worcestershire seam bowler, left Leicestershire in a position of rare embarrassment yesterday. Newport took four wickets in 21 balls to help to reduce the county champions to 33 for five in reply to a total of 257, which, on a slow pitch offering pronounced movement for the bowler of medium pace, is looking more imposing the longer the game goes on.

Another frustrating sequence of showers restricted play to 43 overs. When the last, and heaviest, fall of rain brought the players off at 4.40pm, Leicestershire were 42 for five and unless the weather greatly improves they ought to avoid a first championship defeat since last June. However, if they fail to reach the follow-on target of 108, Worcestershire could yet force a win.

With Haynes and Newport fit again, Worcestershire look a revitalised side. Haynes, who finished unbeaten on 47 after three hours of solid resistance, did not appear in the championship last year and Newport played only five times because of back and Achilles tendon injuries, the latter necessitating an operation. Even in his sixteenth season of county cricket, Newport retains his enthusiasm and, at 34, remains, on his day, as good a traditional English seam bowler as there is.

He gave away nothing yesterday and struck his initial blow with the first ball after lunch, bringing one back sharply to trap the left-handed Sutcliffe leg-before. Two overs later, he produced an immaculate outswinger to locate the edge of Habib's bat and Hick, with his customary ease, pouched the catch low to his left at second slip.

His next ball was even

better, jaggling off the seam and luring Wells into giving Rhodes the thinnest of catches at the wicket. Before he departed, Wells, the acting Leicestershire captain, glared in disbelief at the spot on which the ball pitched.

Johnson prevented the hat-trick without confidence, but Newport was not to be denied his wicket for long. Two overs later, he moved the ball back into the left-hander and won his second leg-before decision from the umpire, Ken Palmer.

Shortly after that, Sherriff, the left-arm seam bowler who was lending Newport excellent support, got in the act by having Maddy caught in the slips, also by Hick. Sherriff, 23, has always been capable of generating a lively head of steam, but against his former county he complemented this by consistently putting the ball in the right place. Perhaps all he needs to do to turn himself into a really decent bowler is to cut down his extraordinarily long run-up.

Macmillan and Nixon, the last two recognised Leicestershire batsmen, were together when the abandonment came and, in view of the fact that they are without two first-choice batsmen in Whitaker, their captain, and Smith, it will be a good test of the side's character today.

The solidity of the Leicestershire batting was one of the features of their title-winning campaign — they only once failed to score more than 250 in the first innings — so the bother they find themselves in here is a relatively new experience. When they last played Worcestershire they achieved their highest total at Grace Road, 638 for eight.

Earlier, Worcestershire added 38 for the loss of their last four wickets. The biggest partnership of the innings, 76 between Haynes and Rhodes, was broken by Johnson, who finished with three wickets. Millins also claimed three and Mullally four. Well as they bowled, they were to be put in the shade by Newport.



Cunliffe, the promising Gloucestershire batsman, deals firmly with a ball from Udall as the hovering close fielders wait for a mistake

Carefree Lynch provides upbeat tempo

BY JAMES ALLEN

BRISTOL (second day of four): Gloucestershire, with eight first-innings wickets in hand, are 173 runs behind Hampshire

GLoucestershire did their best yesterday to inject the sense of urgency that this match had been crying out for. Until they embarked upon their reply to Hampshire's total of 316, three runs an over had been a promised land which had looked unreachable.

From the outset, Gloucestershire accepted the need to force the pace, especially as the rain to which 20 overs were lost was a constant threat. The same could not be said of the Hampshire bowling, with only Connor among

the faster men having any sort of track record. Renshaw had Trainer taken at short leg, but Wright made serene progress until he was caught in two minds and played on to a short one from Mascarenhas, knowing a decent score had gone begging.

With Lynch entering the fray, there was no danger of a period of retrenchment. An airy swish outside the off stump marked his arrival, an edge to the third-man boundary was his first scoring stroke. Thereafter, it was nothing but the sweetness of timing and lordly air that have been the defining features of his batting since his career in county cricket started 20 years ago.

When others might have had their eye on the close and their thoughts on the morrow,

he was repeatedly lashing Stephenson to the cover boundary. As the light deteriorated, he pulled Renshaw past square leg for his tenth four, which brought up his half-century. He had needed only 44 balls. Perhaps it was out of consideration for Cunliffe, who had been more studious, that he was then happy to accept the umpire's offer as the weather closed in.

At the start of the day, Gloucestershire needed to dislodge the last four Hampshire batsmen, but they lasted the best part of 90 minutes. Lawrence belted a counter-attack and threw his giant frame full length at mid-off to make one earth-shaking stop. However, when the new ball became available, he managed only three overs with it before departing with a calf

strain, the cold and the exertions of his comeback having caught up with him.

Largely thanks to Udall, Hampshire were able to crawl past 300, though no one could accuse him of not trying to be positive. Dropped by Lynch when he made one attacking foray, he fell to Young attempting another. The Tasmanian accepted the return catch above his head with an assured nonchalance. A third wicket, when he found the edge of Renshaw's flashing blade, was no less than he deserved for an economic mixture of swing and seam.

Among the younger Hampshire batsmen, there are some reputations to be cemented this season. Lane has attracted good notices, while Kendall has scored consistently since making a century for

Oxford in the University Match last year. Here, he persevered, a pillar of obduracy for 2½ hours while making 47. His departure did little to enliven proceedings, Mascarenhas soon offering the tangle of chances to give Smith a fourth wicket.

In the morning, rain seemed likely to play a leading role on three occasions before retreating to the wings. Twice the umpires headed for the pavilion before doing an about-turn almost immediately. By this time, though, the covers were on their way out and some of the players had reached the dressing-room. Others had stayed out in the middle, hands on hips, reluctant to leave their posts. The county grounds of England are the natural habitat of such eccentricity.

Essex give Randall lesson in scoring

BY RICHARD HOBSON

FENNERT (second day of three): Essex, with seven first-innings wickets in hand, are 63 runs behind Cambridge University

SHORTLY after tea yesterday, Cambridge University hit upon an ingenious way to slow down the Essex scoring. They put Derek Randall in charge of the scoreboard.

With so many passing spectators stopping for a quick chat and handshake, the concentration of the inimitable Randall inevitably wavered. Fortunately, the scorers' box is situated nearby; when Randall, a Cambridge coach, first popped his head round to compare totals, he had inadvertently marked Essex five runs down. Thus was the tone set for the session.

It mattered little, for Essex were able to proceed at leisure against the students' attack. Cambridge are well endowed on the batting front this season, as they demonstrated on Wednesday. Their bowling, though, is sadly lacking and the absence of Tennent through injury and Jauch to exam commitments has accentuated the weakness.

Prichard and Robinson both prospered in compiling a first-wicket stand of 136. They had every reason to contemplate further advances when Quentin Hughes joined the attack as the seventh bowler. An occasional purveyor of off spin, Jones has featured ostensibly as a batsman in his appearances for Durham's second team. He had bowled

only four overs this season until yesterday, but can expect longer spells for the remainder of his first year as an undergraduate after claiming a wicket in each of his first two overs to peg back the visitors.

Prichard appeared a certainty to record his second hundred in four days, adding to his 114 in the Benson and Hedges Cup success against Somerset on Monday. He was dropped by Churton, the wicketkeeper, on nine, but reached his half-century with a towering pull off Dawson and had advanced to 72 when Will House at mid-wicket accepted a sharp, low catch.

Robinson needed time at the crease after a slow start to the season. He settled quickly, cut powerfully and outscored his captain, but enjoyed less of the strike after reaching 50 and lost his fluency. Immediately after tea, he gave a hard return catch to Hughes.

Easy, this bowling lark. Hughes might have considered: Well, not always. There is a downside to the occupation and the golden arm was soon to wilt under an onslaught from Danny Law. Hughes went for 22 runs in his last two overs.

To add to his five wickets on the first day, Law is in a position to post another landmark today when he resumes on 39. But for the wretched weather, which lopped 175 minutes off play, he might have completed the second hundred of his career already. Though he, like Prichard, was fortunate to survive a dropped catch early in his innings. Nobody was more disappointed than Randall when bad light terminated proceedings.

Speight keeps up good work

BY IVO TENNANT

ALAN KNOTT has a new protégé. Or, at least, another pupil. Martin Speight, who joined the exodus from Hove specifically to enhance his career with Durham, has spent much of the early part of the season studying hours of videotapes and poring over the advice that he has been given by the greatest of wicketkeepers. He is determined to look the part.

Speight's decision to leave Sussex was not, he said, connected with the shenanigans at the club last season, although he believes that the stress he suffered over his deteriorating relationship with the committee led to his illness, ME, which resulted in him missing the entire season of 1995. Quite simply, he wanted to keep wicket and came to the realisation that he was not going to take Peter Moore's place.

"I felt at the end of 1994 that, if I was ever going to go on an England tour, I would have done so by then. I did not enjoy my cricket last year and thought that if I could keep wicket and bat as well as I had been doing, I would have greater opportunities. And I was 29, engaged and had just bought a house. I felt I had to earn more money," Speight said.

"Even then, to make the decision to leave was a hard one. It is a shame the upheaval at Hove did not happen two years ago, because

Sussex would have been a successful side by now. But I felt underrated by the chairman and committee and they were not paying the young players what I thought they should have been receiving."

Speight had been to Durham University (and gained a decent degree: a 2:1 in archaeology/ancient history). Even so, the prognostications were not good. Durham had taken on four former students — James Bowling, Graeme Fowler, Simon Hughes and Ian Langley — and none could be said to have been a success. Yet he has begun the season competently. "Martin has worked hard at his keeping and done well," Norman Gifford, the

Durham coach, said. "I was with him for most of his career with Sussex and knew he would add to our depth."

In his 11 years with Sussex, Speight gained a reputation for attacking the bowling from the very start of an innings in limited-overs cricket. His half-century in the high-scoring NatWest Trophy final of 1993 was a memorable piece of hitting. He expects to bat this season at No 5 or No 6 in championship matches, having replaced Chris Sout and David Ligertwood, and anywhere in the order in the one-day game.

It is, though, his wicketkeeping that concerns him. Knott came to coach him at his request. "Alan took 12 hours of film of me and we did a great deal of work on one-handed diving catches. He argued that I would not always reach the ball two-handed at full stretch. He taught me not to let my right hip drop away."

Speight said. "Above all, Alan is very positive and David Boon, my new captain at Durham, has been telling me that Ian Healy, the Australia wicketkeeper, was not particularly good when he started but worked tremendously hard at his game. I have set myself a target of 1,000 runs and keeping wicket well this season. I think that in the one-day competitions, Durham will surprise a few people."



Speight ambitious

Smith and Giles edge out Patel

BY JOHN THICKNESS

OXFORD (second day of three): Oxford University, with seven second-innings wickets in hand, are 147 runs behind Warwickshire

CHETAN PATEL, a post-graduate taking a diploma in social sciences, set the scene for what was nearly a great day for Oxford cricket with the University's first hat-trick since 1967. Sadly for him and his teammates, however, Ashley Giles and Neil Smith, batting No 8 and 9 for Warwickshire, had failed to read the script.

When Smith took guard 13 minutes before tea, with Warwickshire 174 for seven, it looked as though Oxford were about to bowl out a county for the first time since 1994. So they might have, and deservedly, if in the next over an edge by Giles had been hauled down by second slip instead of whistling a four over Byron Byrne's head and racing to the boundary.

Giles, 13 then, survived a similarly testing chance at 27, when Mark Wagh at first slip could only parry another rapid edge. Oxford would not have been flattered by Warwickshire been all out by then, nor the county in any way disgraced, so often had Patel, James Averis and Chris Batarbee passed defensive bats with swing and seam.

But Giles's second life proved

fatal. Shortly after tea, Smith, watched by his father, M. J. K., who captained Oxford in 1956, lashed 18 off five balls from Batarbee and swung the game. When Giles followed his example, they added 123 in 57 minutes and left the University in disarray. When Nick Knight made his declaration, 168 ahead, Smith had taken only 44 balls to score 55, which contained eight fours and a six.

Deflated as Oxford were, it was little surprise when, within two overs of their second innings starting, they were one for two, Welch and Brown picking up their openers. Rain cut 15 minutes from their survival time and one chance went

to ground, but, before the close, Knight, who, after 40 minutes batting in the morning, had enough confidence in the finger that he broke while on tour with England to take up position at short leg, helped Brown to a second wicket by catching Lightfoot, a left-hander.

Fowell, Welch and Brown were the burly Patel's hat-trick victims and it much increased the bowlers' pleasure that, having played for Warwickshire's second XI in 1992, all three were erstwhile team-mates. He has played for five other county second teams, among them Middlesex and Surrey. He needed help for only one when Russell potted up to a ball that pitched on his off stump and would have hit the middle.

Celebrations for that were cut short by the wicket falling to the last ball of an over, but delight was unconfined when Welch was bowled off stump by the first ball of the next, whereupon Patel located Brown's edge for Wagh to complete the hat-trick with a sharp catch low to his right two-handed at first slip.

Seeing it pounced, Patel, 25, stretched his follow-through into a jubilant curve between his four-man slip field, where he was duly smothered by his team-mates. It was the third hat-trick of his life, the previous ones coming for Horney and Loughborough, and the match ball will join its fellows on his mantelpiece.



Brown: third victim

Wednesday hung out to dry after East End sponge bath

LYNNE TRUSS



Kicking and Screaming

At West Ham United's stadium, Upton Park, when a player requires medical attention, a very bizarre message is played on the murky multi-screen scoreboard. A speech-bubble appears, with curly handwriting inside. It appears to date from 1952.

"Oh no, a man is down," it says. Then another message is flashed up: "What can we do?" Finally (just as the injured player is hopping off to the dressing-room) comes the last bit: "This looks like a job for... SUPER SPONGE!" At which point an animated sponge with arms and legs (reminiscent of Ted Rogers's Dusty Bin) whirls on the screen like a superhero.

Well, it's a credit to Hammers fans that they still take themselves so seriously with Super Sponge as their talisman. Other teams have Eric Cantona and Matt Le Tissier, and the Hammers have this little bendy fellow who makes bath-time fun-time. However, not a sign of the usual floppy wetness was on show last Saturday when West Ham beat Sheffield Wednesday by a phenomenal 5-1. It made you wonder: has the big sponge one had his day?

For Harrison leapt and Kitson stormed and Wednesday were scared to death. How would it come all the way from South Yorkshire to face a team famous for its fatal porousness, and find them running straight at you in warpaint "Aaagh!" like commandos fresh from bayonet training. The Owls fans sang lustily all afternoon, but for obvious empirical reasons, "You'll never beat Des Walker" was abandoned fairly early on.

It was all to do with relegation fears, of course, this astonishing last-minute heroism. At the bottom of the Premiership, the bad or lazy teams now scramble over each other like loads in a jar—and I find myself playing God deciding which ones I'll allow to go down. Nottingham Forest would have been my first choice, as it happens; so their early surrender is fine by me. But what about the other



Joy unconfined for Harrison, right, and Kitson as they celebrate their goalscoring double act. Photograph: Allsport

two? Hmm. Coventry don't add much to the gaiety of nations, although of course Gordon Strachan's Rumpelstiltskin entertainment value should not be overlooked. Sunderland's only got Chris Waddle.

On the other hand, Southampton must stay up, as must Middlesbrough and Leicester. Sentiment is not entirely absent from these judgments, incidentally. (Unchecked prejudice likewise plays a part.)

But my point is, until last Saturday, I must certainly have put West Ham on my trapdoor list, and now I'm not so sure. "They're playing brilliantly," I yelled to my friend, Robert, beside me in the visitors' stand. "Did you see how Harrison jumped just now? Like a salmon leaping up a waterfall! I've never seen anything like it!"

Robert looked glum. As an Owls fan, he was having a very bad afternoon. "I'll tell you one thing," he finally pronounced on West Ham: "They're not as foreign as they're cracked up to be." In which surreal verdict there was admitted great truth.

Mainly, the Owls fans just winced under the violence of each successive blow that

rained. There were two goals in the first ten minutes and it was clear that, barring an unscheduled evacuation of the ground (or an earthquake), the one-sided scoring trend was unstoppable. Wednesday were just hapless witnesses to their own defeat.

I mentioned once before in this column the horrible confluence of images occurring when Hammers beat Owls and on this occasion the metaphor was especially compelling. A frenzied attack was

"You'll never beat Des Walker" was abandoned fairly early on

what police would call this. And afterwards, just a few grey feathers blew pathetically across the pitch. A bit of claw, a bit of beak. A mournful, dying tweet-two.

While Robert wrestled with his grief, I instinctively cheered the West Ham goals. "Five! This is incredible!" the majority of Wednesday fans were maintaining a level of denial quite unknown outside of football crowds.

"Barryarmy," they chanted, over and over. Clap, clap barryarmy: clap, clap

does. Personally, however, I've only just worked out why there are 38 games in a season. There is nothing cabalistic about the digits. It's just 19 opponents multiplied by two. Tch. What a blind, over-elaborate rummy I have been.

Also since Saturday, of course, Manchester United have become champions. And it's all over, just like that. I can't believe it. "A shame you had to win by defeat," I commented sympathetically to a rabid Man U fan on Wednesday night, choosing my words without sufficient care.

"By DEFALITY," he echoed. Fortunately, he's a good mate or he'd have knocked me down. Evidently, winning is the crucial thing where the league is concerned; a glorious last-ditch encounter is just a bit of icing on the cake.

But I still don't understand how the champions generate a proper spirit of celebration when their win results from such bathos as Newcastle not winning and Liverpool losing (or whatever it was). It lacks occasion. "I see we've won, then," Man U fans must have sighed pleasantly after Tuesday night's results. They stood up, made cocoa, went to bed. "So. Right. Well. See you in the morning."

RUGBY LEAGUE

Betts off to Wigan again

BY CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

ALL is far from well at Wigan. The team is stuck in the bottom half of the Super League and there is a move by rebel shareholders to overthrow the board, but the return next year of Denis Betts will mean a reassuring and galvanising presence at Central Park.

Wigan yesterday finalised the deal that will bring Betts back to his former club, half-way through a five-year contract with Auckland Warriors. A reported £850,000 deal over four years will make Betts comfortably the highest-paid player in England—a price for the Great Britain forward that Wigan, and not Leeds, were prepared to pay.

Betts, 27, will see out the Australasian Super League season and forthcoming world club championship with Auckland, who recently agreed to his release because of "family reasons". Betts said: "Obviously, things have changed at Wigan, but that gives me a new challenge. Sheer hard work made them the No 1 club in the world and the same will do that again."

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RADIO CHOICE

And here's one made earlier

Blue Peter

Following hard on the 40th anniversary celebrations for *The Slay At Night* comes a landmark in the history of another show which started in the 1950s and is still flourishing. *Blue Peter* went on air in 1958, the year after Patrick Moore's first date with the stars, and this afternoon's edition is number 3,000. Such longevity is rare enough to those ungallant souls who have mocked *Blue Peter* over the years for the relentless jollity of its presentation and ability to find the most unlikely uses for discarded yoghurt pots. But the series has changed as society has changed, as today's programme will demonstrate.

Two former presenters, Valerie Singleton (1962 to 1972) and Mark Curry (1986 to 1989) are on hand to stir the nostalgia and there is a look at what life was like for children in *Blue Peter*'s debut year.

Porridge: Pardon Me
BBC1, 8.00pm (not Scotland)
Once again the paucity of good new sitcoms compels the thought that some of the funniest material on the small screen is more than 20 years old. Even episodes of *Dad's Army* that have been shown so often that you almost know the lines backwards can still delight, while *Porridge* is a show which really deserves that overused word classic. It seems you do not get writing as sharp and witty any more and one day, no doubt, somebody will write a PhD thesis trying to explain why. Meanwhile it is enough to enjoy again the wonderful Clement-La Frenais scripts as they triumph on every level, especially in marrying the jokes with a satisfying plot. Ronnie Barker's Fletcher is not the least of the pleasures and tonight's episode has the bonus of equally splendid comic acting as David Jason takes his occasional *Porridge* role of the old lag, Blanco.

Gardeners' World
BBC2, 8.30pm
On Channel 4 *Garden Party* is proving a fivellier show than it was first time round but the BBC's old faithful is still the one to beat. Getting members of the public to air their problems, as *Gardeners' World* does, is admirable in theory, but can be less than

gripping in practice. Television is better left to professionals, and of these *Gardeners' World* has a fine crop. There is none better than the anchor-man, Alan Titchmarsh, who combines a cheery presence with solid instruction. Tonight he is demonstrating the basic techniques for growing tomatoes and offering tips for planting up hanging baskets. With Bob Flowerdew taking a break the eco slot goes to Pippa Greenwood, reporting on a local authority scheme to recycle garden waste and sell it back to the public as compost.

See You Friday
ITV, 8.30pm
The remarks about *Porridge* were not meant as a dig at Alan Whiting's new series, which is in any case less sitcom than romantic comedy. Greg and Lucy have a holiday fling in Crete, but because they live 250 miles apart (she in London, he in Newcastle) it becomes difficult to sustain the romance back home. Whiting's scenario is peppered with embarrassments, misunderstandings and arrangements made and thwarted as the lovers couple try to keep the affair going. It is gentle and unassuming stuff, perhaps a shade predictable, but for a large proportion of the female population, at least, the casting of Neil Pearson as Greg will be sufficient reason for tuning in. Nor does television's Mr Heathcote disappoint, though Jessica Rother, in her first series as comedy, provides an engaging foil.

Book at Bedtime: The Oedipus Complex
Radio 4, 10.45pm
No finer tribute could be paid to the late V.S. Pritchett than these readings of two of his short stories by John Moffat. Pritchett, who died in March, was a master of the genre. You had only to listen to *The Vice-Consul*, last night's *Book at Bedtime*, to recognise that fact. But, in case you know it or, worse still, misread the point of it, you have another chance tonight to put matters right. *The Oedipus Complex* is Pritchett at his best and John Moffat at his best. It tells of a yam-spinning dentist "who suggested—in a quiet way—war". He is struggling to remove a stubbornly resistant root which he treats like a sworn enemy who must be conquered. To say more would be to ruin your enjoyment.

BBC Singers Choral Masterwork Series
Radio 3, 7.30pm
As they say, you can't win 'em all. Little did Stanley Kubrick think, when he made *2001—A Space Odyssey*, that, by using the spectacular opening section of Richard Strauss's tone poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra* as the opening music of his film, he was introducing it to music that did not attend György Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*, though Kubrick made good use of it in 2001. This unearthly and vocally demanding choral work is performed in tonight's BBC Singers concert, live from London. Other items are by Debussy, Ratz, Bartók, Maxwell Davies and—a world premiere—Tristan Murrell. The conductor is Sir John Joly, with John Alfey and Catherine Edwards on keyboards. Peter Dawson

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WORLD SERVICE

And here's one made earlier

Blue Peter

Following hard on the 40th anniversary celebrations for *The Slay At Night* comes a landmark in the history of another show which started in the 1950s and is still flourishing. *Blue Peter* went on air in 1958, the year after Patrick Moore's first date with the stars, and this afternoon's edition is number 3,000. Such longevity is rare enough to those ungallant souls who have mocked *Blue Peter* over the years for the relentless jollity of its presentation and ability to find the most unlikely uses for discarded yoghurt pots. But the series has changed as society has changed, as today's programme will demonstrate.

Two former presenters, Valerie Singleton (1962 to 1972) and Mark Curry (1986 to 1989) are on hand to stir the nostalgia and there is a look at what life was like for children in *Blue Peter*'s debut year.

Porridge: Pardon Me
BBC1, 8.00pm (not Scotland)
Once again the paucity of good new sitcoms compels the thought that some of the funniest material on the small screen is more than 20 years old. Even episodes of *Dad's Army* that have been shown so often that you almost know the lines backwards can still delight, while *Porridge* is a show which really deserves that overused word classic. It seems you do not get writing as sharp and witty any more and one day, no doubt, somebody will write a PhD thesis trying to explain why. Meanwhile it is enough to enjoy again the wonderful Clement-La Frenais scripts as they triumph on every level, especially in marrying the jokes with a satisfying plot. Ronnie Barker's Fletcher is not the least of the pleasures and tonight's episode has the bonus of equally splendid comic acting as David Jason takes his occasional *Porridge* role of the old lag, Blanco.

Gardeners' World
BBC2, 8.30pm
On Channel 4 *Garden Party* is proving a fivellier show than it was first time round but the BBC's old faithful is still the one to beat. Getting members of the public to air their problems, as *Gardeners' World* does, is admirable in theory, but can be less than

gripping in practice. Television is better left to professionals, and of these *Gardeners' World* has a fine crop. There is none better than the anchor-man, Alan Titchmarsh, who combines a cheery presence with solid instruction. Tonight he is demonstrating the basic techniques for growing tomatoes and offering tips for planting up hanging baskets. With Bob Flowerdew taking a break the eco slot goes to Pippa Greenwood, reporting on a local authority scheme to recycle garden waste and sell it back to the public as compost.

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RADIO CHOICE

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laser surgery. That didn't stop the programme's two guinea pigs going ahead with the procedure, and it didn't stop them becoming absolutely thrilled with the results. But it did ensure a long-term future for my telly glasses.

Given what had preceded it, it was perhaps not the ideal night for a director to go right back to basics with *This Life* (BBC2) in its new Thursday night slot. Cameras wobbled and edits were cut at speed that has not been seen since episode one, series one. All very dizzy-making but all still wonderfully enjoyable. Fendy finally got Warren's room.

After all the good word Ramon Tikkanen has put in to run what was virtually a non-speaking part into an established regular, and the ghostly Rachel (a wonderfully convincing Natasha Little) managed to annoy Milly even more. Nobody had any terrible accidents... this week.


In... and hold... and cut again. Thank goodness Tom still had a pen-knife, a clean towel and a couple of codeine tablets around. eh? No time at all he was up on his good leg, hopping into the wheel-house and straight on to the mobile phone. And the moral of this story, we later learnt, is that if you're going to lose a leg, it's best to have it torn off. The arteries go into spasm and you lose less blood.

CHANNEL 5 ON SATELLITE

- CHANNEL 5 ON SATELLITE**
Channel 5 is now broadcasting on transponder N 63 on the Astra Satellite. Viewers with a Videocrypt decoder will be able to receive the channel free of charge. Frequencies for transponder N 63 are picture: 10.92075 GHz; sound: 7.02 and 7.20 MHz
- 5.00am 5 News Early** (8968547)
5.30 HavaKazoo (5713267)
6.00 Adventures of the Bush Patrol (8663489)
6.30 Wildlife: The Shrinking World The future of television (8555480)
6.50 Espresso (2659712) **10.00 Exclusive** (†) (7270825) **10.30 Nancy Lang** (†) (842996) **11.00 Leeza** (9319996) **11.50 Double Espresso** (34610296) **12.00 The Bold and the Beautiful** (†) (8633249) **12.30pm Family Affairs** (†) (4745267)
1.00 5 News Update (49061286) **1.05 Sunset Beach** (†) (3722289) **2.00 5's Company** (7244538)
3.30 The Young Ones (1982, b/w) Teen musical starring Cliff Richard, directed by Sidney J. Furie (8939335)
5.00 100 Per Cent (3415489)
6.00 Whittle Game show (9405002)
6.30 Family Affairs (†) (9496354)
7.00 Exclusive (5118985)
7.30 Wildlife SOS A lion threatens the animals of the wildlife sanctuary (†) (9482538)



The presenter Tim Vincent (8.00pm)

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- 8.00 Attractions** Tim Vincent visits the Astor Martin factory in Newport Pagnell (4832703)
- 8.30 5 News** (7263278)
- 9.00 Trade Off** (1995) with Theresa Russell and Adam Baldwin. A thriller about a man who is drawn into a passionate affair while on a business trip to Miami (90585441)
- 10.50 Exclusive Extra** (4711489)
- 11.00 The Jack Docherty Show** (5068064)
- 11.40 Club Class** (5479373)
- 12.10am News and sport** (6745213)
- 12.15 The Myth of the Male Orgasm** (1993) with Bruce Dinsmore. A psychology professor, aged 30 and single, volunteers as a subject in an experiment conducted by a feminist group. Directed by John Hamilton (790213)
- 2.00 Red River** (1988) with James Amoss and Bruce Boxleitner. A western drama about a 1,000-mile cattle drive. Directed by Richard Michaels (7736584)
- 3.35 Appointment in Honduras** (1953) with Glenn Ford and Ann Sheridan. A thriller about a man hired to deliver a large sum of money to a deposed president hiding in the Honduran jungle. Directed by Jacques Tourneur (6638328)
- 4.40 Prisoner: Cell Block H** (4237566)

CHALLENGE TV
Win with Prize Time twice an hour
5.05pm Cross Words (9301002) 6.50 Family
Fortunes (523335) 6.20 Challenge TV
Family Days Out (640064) 6.3
Catchphrase (936373) 7.05 Winner Take
All (825199) 7.40 Give Us A Clue (80510)

- [illegible]

SPORT

CRICKET 44-45

Reports and scores from all the first class matches

GOLF 42

Montgomerie forced to take rough with the smooth

Defender relinquishes dual role

Pearce hands Forest reins over to Bassett

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

STUART PEARCE'S flirtation with football management will end on Sunday, when Nottingham Forest bid farewell to the FA Carling Premiership after their game against Newcastle United at St James' Park. Pearce, the England and Forest defender, announced yesterday that he is to relinquish his dual role as player and caretaker manager. He will be replaced by Dave Bassett, the club's general manager.

The move, though not surprising, at least concludes Forest's disappointing campaign on a positive note, with the respective jobs at the City Ground now clearly defined. Pearce will play next season, in the Nationwide League first division, and Bassett will manage. The confusion about who was doing what, which had plagued Forest since Bassett's arrival in February, has been resolved.

Bonds walks into the lions' den at Millwall

MILLWALL appointed their third manager in as many months yesterday when Billy Bonds joined the Nationwide League second division club (Russell Kempson writes). He replaced John Docherty, who resigned last week.

Bonds, 50, the former West Ham United manager, faces an unenviable task. Millwall faded after a promising start to the season, eventually finishing in thirteenth place, and the club is still being run by administrators.

"I know it's going to be a real challenge, we'll need maximum effort from everybody to turn things around," Bonds, who has signed a two-year contract, said. "At least

wouldn't really be able to get out and about scouting for players.

"It's probably best if I step down, because to do the job the way I'd like to do it, I'd prefer to go out and look at players myself. If I'm not able to do that, I'm not really prepared to sit back and take someone else's word for it."

Pearce denied reports that there had been tension between him and Bassett, who was appointed after the lengthy takeover of the club had been completed. "I think people tried to drive a wedge between us," he said, "but I've

got no problem working with Dave."

Bassett, 52, accepted the promotion with mixed feelings. Crystal Palace, his former club, will play in the Premiership next season if they successfully negotiate the first division play-offs. They play Wolverhampton Wanderers in the first leg of their semi-final at Selhurst Park tomorrow.

"Stuart remains in charge on Sunday and I'll take over on Monday," Bassett said. "We've been relegated, we can't escape that, and the objective now is to get back at the first attempt. There was always the chance if Stuart stood down, I'd be back at the sharp end. I would have preferred to have been taking charge of the club while we were still in the Premiership, but we'll just have to get back the hard way, by winning promotion next year."

Forest's season had begun promisingly, with a 3-0 victory away to Coventry City, but, with the takeover rumbling along in the background — casting doubt over the future of the club and restricting Frank Clark, then the manager, in his purchasing power — the slide became unstoppable.

They did not win any of their next 16 league fixtures and had become rooted to the foot of the Premiership by mid-November. Six days before Christmas, Clark could take no more. He resigned, later to re-emerge at Manchester City.

Pearce assumed control, albeit reluctantly. He was successful in his first game in charge, a 2-1 home victory against Arsenal, and Forest won three of their next five league matches, rising to seventh in the table. Since then, though, there has been little to enthuse about.

Forest have won only once in 14 outings — they also made an ignominious FA Cup fifth-round exit against Chesterfield — and relegation was confirmed last weekend. Pearce gradually accepted the inevitable: he was not yet ready to finish playing, he was not yet ready for management.

"The job probably came a couple of years too early," he said, "but, at the time, the club was in a bit of a jam. I've no regrets, though. I've always made decisions honestly and I've always stuck by them. Perhaps other people in my position, thinking that the club could probably go down in five months' time, might not have taken it on. I'm not that way inclined."

Bassett paid tribute to his predecessor and remains optimistic. "Stuart has shown he's not frightened to make decisions," he said. "He was there when the club needed him and will still be there when I need him. Life is full of challenges and, hopefully, this is the start of a new era at Forest. I'm not interested in what's gone before. From Monday, it's a clean slate."



Pearce: commitments



Smith, right, celebrates Rangers' title triumph with Gascoigne, who may find he has several new team-mates next season. Photograph: Ian Stewart

Smith prepares to recreate Rangers

By KEVIN MCCARRA

ON WEDNESDAY night, Walter Smith leapt on top of a huddle of Rangers players, hugging the men who, with their 1-0 victory over Dundee United at Tannadice, had secured a ninth successive Scottish League premier division championship. Now, however, the manager will tear his team apart.

The dismantling of the side almost feels like a betrayal to him, but it is, in fact, a duty.

The club's progress towards a title that matches the record set by Jack Stein's Celtic, between 1966 and 1974, was bedevilled by injuries. Rangers admit that the ailments had been virtually inevitable in a squad that has grown elderly. Richard Gough, the captain, now

leaves to join Kansas City Wizards in the United States and others will make less colourful departures.

Smith enjoyed the triumph, but his celebrations must be truncated. "In 1991," he said, "change was forced upon us by the introduction of the three foreigners rule in European matches. We sold eight players and brought in six then. I don't know if we'll be acting on that scale again, but it could be that we will. It's difficult to talk about it because these players have been terrific for me and I have the highest regard for their determination to keep on winning. I'm disappointed that I have to make decisions that will end an era for a successful team."

Sentimentality, though, will be no obstacle and two players — Jonas Thern, of AS Roma,

and Tony Vidmar, of NAC Breda — have already agreed to join Rangers. Other negotiations are in process and it is probable that another four signings will be made over the next few weeks. Yesterday, it was hard to tell whether Smith was looking back over a triumph or simply previewing the new season.

Rangers are required to enter the European Cup at the pre-qualifying stage and play their first match on July 23. A month before that, the squad is scheduled to return to training. UEFA, European football's ruling body, has devised a format that forces all clubs from the smaller nations into early action. "We would more or less have to win the European Cup to be exempt from the pre-qualifying," Smith said.

Respectability in the competition is the immediate goal. "We cannot run away from the fact that Rangers have not been good enough," Smith said. "In six years, we have qualified for the Champions League group stage three times, but we have not acquitted ourselves well there. I do believe, though, that we will be able to compete on a better and more regular basis now that the three foreigner limitation has been abolished."

Smith has reconciled himself to the fact that Scots are likely to make up only a minority of his side in future. Already, Rangers have learned to depend on the imports and the only goal against Dundee United was scored by Brian Laudrup, the Dane. The fine display of Paul Gascoigne, however, demon-

strated that outsiders can soon acquaint themselves with the passion of Rangers.

Having overcome a thigh strain with unexpected speed, there is even a chance that Gascoigne will now achieve full fitness in time for England's World Cup qualifying match with Poland on May 31. Until Wednesday, the midfield player had not started a match since January 25 and Rangers will be content if football occupies his energies for a few weeks more.

Gascoigne can present a club with difficulties, but he has been Smith's art to recruit players from all over the world and instill in them a respect for Rangers' stature and a desire to add to its glories.

O'Neill's joy, page 46
Vase promise, page 40

Clubs reject merger proposal

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

AFTER six hours of debate yesterday, much of it heated, the Football League threw out recommendations to radically restructure its format. Representatives of the 72 clubs decided that the main thrust of the proposals that the Nationwide League third division should merge with the Vauxhall Conference would not work.

The report, commissioned for about £100,000, was presented by Deloitte & Touche, the management consultancy firm, on Tuesday. However, the initial enthusiasm of David Sheepshanks, the chairman of the League and

Ipswich Town, was not shared by his colleagues.

"The ideas are no more than half-cooked," David Gutterman, the Chester City chairman, said. "The bottom line is that these proposals would have meant the third division sides joining the Vauxhall Conference, not the Conference joining the League."

"As far as I am concerned, this is a report that was commissioned just to do the first division's dirty work. These are ridiculous proposals, drawn up at great cost, and now rightly thrown out at the first attempt."

Other recommendations in

the report received a more favourable response. It is now likely that the League will switch its headquarters from Lytham St Anne's in Lancashire to London and it will also appoint a chief executive, independent chairman and commercial director.

"I'm very pleased that four-fifths of the report has received widespread agreement," Sheepshanks said.

"Everyone wants to see the League more commercially driven, which will be for the benefit of all." The accepted proposals will be ratified at the League's annual meeting next month.

Authorities smell something fishy

Brian Clarke reports on a record catch that may have come from warmer climes

THE British Record Fish Committee (BRFC) has refused to accept a 99lb Welsh catfish taken from an Essex pond in November as a record for the species unless proof can be provided that the pond was stocked legally.

The capture of the fish caused a sensation when it was reported by Steve Bond from a two-acre lake at Oak Lodge, Rayleigh, near Southend. Since catfish were introduced to Great Britain more than 100 years ago, the fish have spread to several lakes in the home counties and have established cult status with some anglers. However, nothing remotely the size of Bond's fish had been taken.

Indeed, the fish, 7ft long, was big beyond all comprehension — 35lb bigger than the existing catfish record, half as heavy again as the ancient salmon record, 44lb heavier than the biggest carp ever caught in Britain, twice the size of the biggest pike.

Bond lodged a claim for the record immediately, a fact that surprised nobody given that he owned the lake. The capture of a record on any water increases the price that an owner can demand of anglers wishing to fish it.

However, a statement now issued by the BRFC says that, as there is no record of catfish being previously caught at Oak Lodge, the committee requires production of "consent certificates under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981".

These are the acts that regulate the movement of fish between inland waters and the introduction to them of non-native species. The statement says that Bond's claim cannot be considered further without such certificates and

that Bond has been informed of this.

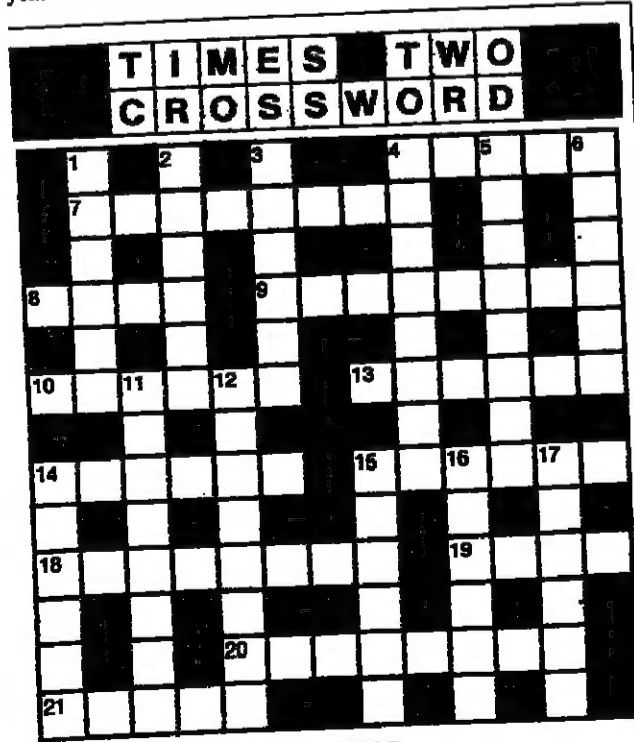
At the time of the capture, Bond said that a number of catfish had been introduced to the lake by the previous owners in the mid-1970s and that the lake had scarcely been fished since. He denied rumours that the "record" fish had been smuggled in. "Nothing like that has ever been put in," he said. "It is all just jealousy."

A spokesman for the Environment Agency (EA), however, confirmed yesterday that Dr Tony Owen, the head of fisheries, had taken the unusual step of writing to the BRFC. Owen's letter said: "It is extremely unlikely that the 99lb Welsh catfish caught by Mr Steve Bond at his Essex fishery grew to such a size at that fishery or, indeed, any

where else in the United Kingdom. The temperature of UK waters, and therefore the amount of available food, is not high enough to allow fish to grow to such a size. The nearest area where a Welsh catfish would be likely to grow to 99lb is southern Europe."

An EA spokesman expressed frustration with the state of the law. "Exotic fish can carry all sorts of diseases," he said. "We are aware of many more incidents of them being illegally introduced than we have evidence to prosecute. We presently need to catch people red-handed, actually putting them in, before we can act."

What was needed, he said, were powers to net out any exotic fish stocked without authority, if such powers existed, they would remove all incentive to publicise the presence of the fish — and publicity on angling waters was usually the name of the game.



No 1089

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| 1 Winged boy with bow (5) | 1 Turn up: seem (6) |
| 7 Wide view (5) | 2 Ill-feeling (6) |
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